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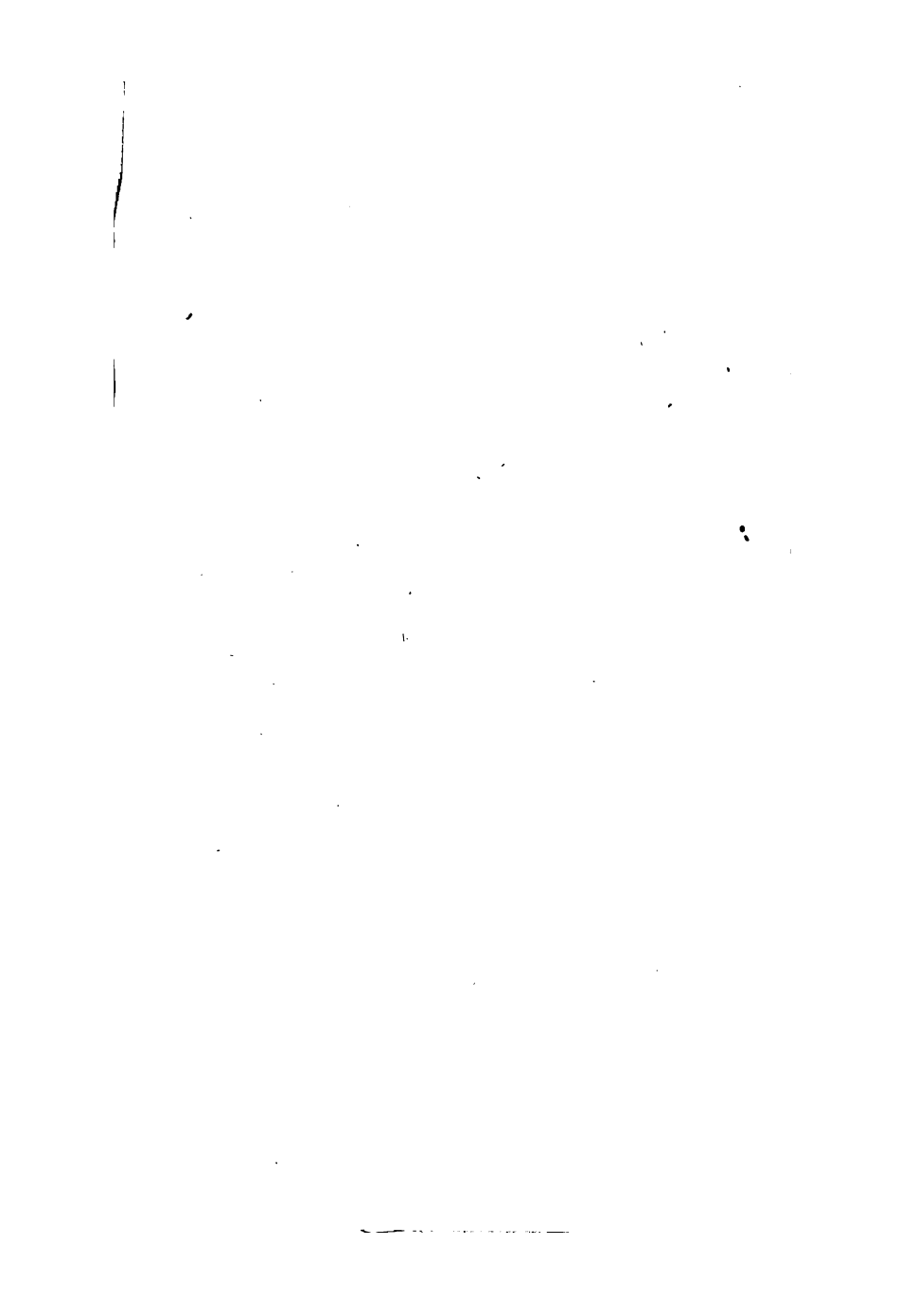
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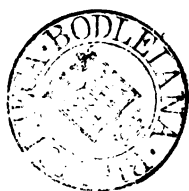


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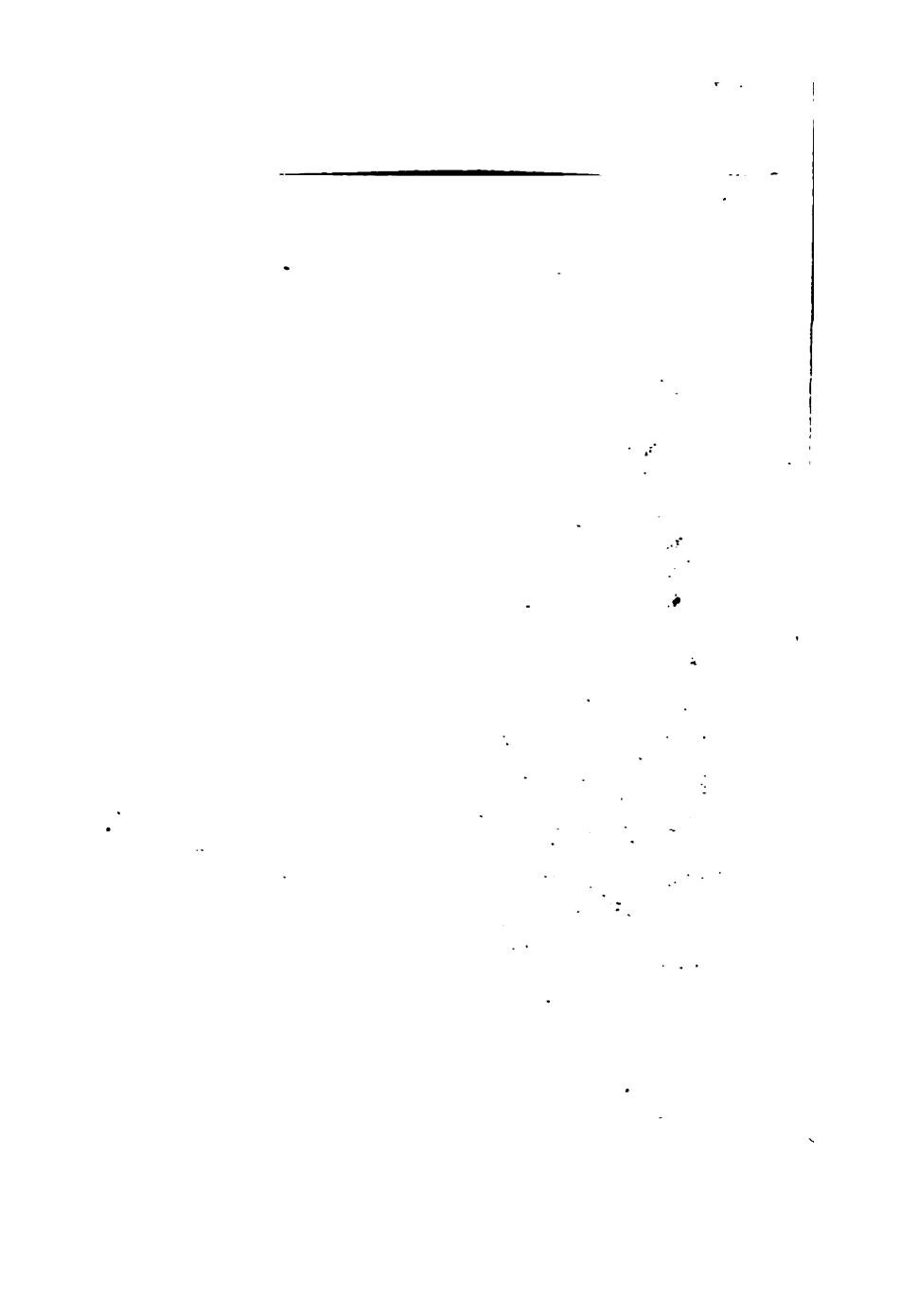




ROW;

250. g. 309.







STORIES  
FROM  
GREEK MYTHOLOGY.

*By the*  
*REV. JAMES WOOD,*  
*Edinburgh.*

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"Fable is Love's world, his house, his birth-place:  
Delightedly dwells he 'mong fays, and talkmaas,  
And spirits; and delightedly believes  
Divinities, being himself divine."

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Cambridge.



LONDON:  
T. NELSON AND SONS, PATERNOSTER ROW;  
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1867.

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## PREFACE

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**T**HE following Tales, composed principally to interest the youthful Reader in the Greek Mythology, are derived partly from the classical originals, and partly from excellent versions of them in German. They are written from a sincere affection for them as fantasies, and a conviction that they contain a high and noble, as well as true meaning,—true, at once, to the spirit and life-theorem of the people among whom they were conceived, and as poetic representations of vital elements in the mystery of life to this hour. The construction they put upon things is a wonderfully just and wise one, and bespeaks high inspirations,—as, indeed, all genuine insight into reality everywhere especially does. The Wisest is omnipresent, and reveals his secrets universally to the seeing eye and the hearing ear. The revelation in all its fulness is nowhere wanting, only the sense to discern it, and the courage to be true to it. The Greeks had natures endowed with intellect and daring of the first quality, lived in manifold fearless just relation to the God's fact, and knew thereby not a little of true wisdom. Their power of fantasy and gift of articulate speech, too, the world has nowhere else seen surpassed or equalled; and the fancies they, with their fine faculties, conceived and cherished were, in no respect, empty, or idle,

ones, but earnest withal. They strove to make them images of reality, and, indeed, took pleasure in them, and gained acceptance for them, only as real representations. Not so earnest by any means as the Jews, who stood in awe of the fact far too seriously to attempt fantasies of it. Yet the Greek fancies did reflect and reveal reality with a depth and subtlety of insight, genuineness of sympathy, breadth of conception, and truth of representation, which we in vain seek for in the genius of any other people. Reality is, no doubt, greater, and more vital to know in so real a world and life, than any fiction; and the thoughts of God, which the facts are, are infinitely more precious than the fancies of man about them, or even according to them; yet, is man's power of fancying, or fantasying, in harmony with the fact, the measure of his knowledge of it and vital relationship to it, and the divinely-appointed means withal whereby the fact itself is brought home to our affections. The thoughts of men true to the divine are the key to the thoughts of God; and here, in the Greek Myths especially, we have the Greek fancy, not an unfaithful one, of the God's fact. Read candidly, they speak worthily and truly. Though the properly Christian element, even as an idea, still more as a spirit, is by all accounts absent, there is much in them calculated at once to purify and elevate both the intellect and the heart of the very best among us.

EDINBURGH, *August 1866.*



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I.

Orpheus and Eurydice.

**L**ONG ago, in Thrace, there lived a king who was celebrated far and wide for his masterly skill in music. No one anywhere was ever known to match him ; and all nature, inanimate as well as animate, owned his power. Not only were the hearts of men swayed and led by his melody, but the very beasts of the mountain, the trees of the forest, and the rocks and rivers of the earth. Nay, by it he could charm, spell-bound to his feet, even the Spirit of the Storm, and soothe and settle the raging waves of the sea. The common people ascribed this power to what we call magic, and boldly averred he must be in league with some god or spirit of the upper air. The lyre he wielded was, they said, the direct gift of Apollo to him, while yet a boy ; and the art by which all were charmed was the immediate inspiration of the Muses. He had risen by means of it to be one of the sovereign princes of Greece, and he reigned wisely and happily over a prosperous people.

But there is always a "crack in everything"—a



black spot in our very sunshine ; and often this black spot will suddenly enlarge itself, conceal our sun from us, and plunge us in hopeless night. So was it with Orpheus—for so our king was named ; to him erelong an event befell, under which he sank and saddened, and after which he was never seen to smile more. Of all those that listened to and loved his melodies, there was no one he more delighted to please than his wife Eurydice ; she alone, of all, fully understood his meaning, and by her quick, cordial response, *assured* him that the strain was true. With her for listener he cared not though he had no other ; and to please her alone was worth the approbation of all the world. Hers, he knew, was a true verdict, and one, he felt sure, in everlasting harmony with the best sense and judgment of the whole universe. But she for whom he lived and sang was suddenly taken from him ; and though he still sought and found the companionship of his lyre, it was to his own mood alone he played now—to please himself, and not another.

Eurydice had gone forth into the pleasure-gardens of the palace with her attendant maidens, when, as she stepped along, she was wounded in the ankle by the bite of a lurking serpent. Her servants, alarmed, ran instantly to the palace, called the king's physician, and brought him ; but before he arrived the wound had proved mortal, and the queen was dead. The king, when he heard it, would accept no comfort, but retired into a secret chamber of his palace, and there gave himself over to nameless grief. By-and-by, his grief grown in-

tolerable, he would impulsively sally forth, at all hours of the day and night, to the loneliest spot in his garden, there to lament; and anon he would go, with only his harp for company, to the wildest retreat in all his dominions, to feed his sorrow by listening to the solitudes echoing back to him his wail of woe.

Long time did he waste in this bootless lamenting, when, at last bethinking himself, he formed a purpose, and summoned together the princes of his people to make it known. "You see," he said, addressing them as they stood assembled before him, "how the sorrow I feel for her I have lost has taken away from me all the enjoyment of life, and rendered me helplessly incapable of administering the affairs of my kingdom. Without activity, and delight in it, life, I find, is an intolerable burden; and so I have, to relieve it, resolved upon a long journey away from you—it may be only for a time, it may be for ever. The journey I propose to make is to the nether-world of Pluto; and him I am minded to try if I cannot prevail upon to give me back my lost wife. Perhaps, when he sees my sorrow, he may hear my prayer; and I shall again return to you and the hearty discharge of the duties of my kingdom."

The princes of his people remonstrated with him, and represented the certain risk of the adventure, its probable failure, and the grief they felt, as though they would never see his face again. But Orpheus had taken his resolution, and would not, by any appeal of reason or affection, suffer his

purpose to be changed. Few, he knew, had ever returned again from the nether-world to the upper light ; yet why should he desire to continue a life any longer here, alike profitless to himself and his fellow-mortals ?—so entirely had sorrow usurped all his thoughts and paralyzed his powers for good. That very day, accordingly, he departed ; and the only attendant which accompanied him was his ever faithful harp. He trusted, by means of it alone, to find a way into the heart of Pluto's kingdom, and even to obtain from Pluto the restoration to his affections of his lost Eurydice ; and this confidence of his, as we shall see, was not misplaced.

The route he followed led straight to the entrance of the under-world ; and as soon as he arrived at it, he turned downwards and entered in. The path down, a narrow and steep one, was entered by a low gateway looking north, which, being overhung to right and left, as well as above, by frowning cliffs of black rock, was at no time visited by so much as a single ray of the sun. It was dark, cold, and dismal from its very commencement, and infested at the entrance with a host of bats and vampires, which he had to keep continually chasing away. Steeper, narrower, and more hideous the way down became, until, the horror seeming at its maximum, the darkness relaxed itself, and was in the end exchanged for a dim, general, uncertain, leaden haze. The way, too, widened ; and our hero, as he stepped along, heard now in the distance the sound as it were of a flowing river, and now the fluttering past of misty figures, which we must suppose to

have been the ghosts of men. These last, as he advanced, grew at once more numerous and more distinct; but to the last without colour, and so unreal and shadowy, that "stars, dim twinkling," might be seen through. But all unreal and colourless as they looked, every one seemed strangely agitated and troubled.

Soon, thus attended, did Orpheus come in sight of the river; and the ferryman, when he saw him and his company advancing, turned his skiff to the shore and put to. Straight as he did so, the ghosts crowded forward and rushed in. Some of these he beckoned out with an imperiousness there was no resisting, and the others who were allowed to remain, having presented their ferry-money, he prepared to transport across. Just as Orpheus came up to the bank, it happened that Charon had turned the prow to the opposite shore, and was pushing off. "Where is thy passage-money, sirrah?" growled he, staying his boat and looking towards him. "I hope to come back again, and I will pay it then." "Back again, think you?" muttered the grim one; "hardly:" but put to, took him in, and steered across the stream.

Orpheus, when he landed, was, along with the rest of his companions, presented, in a basin of black marble, with a draught of the waters of Lethe, a tributary of the larger river, the Styx, he had just crossed; but he at once declined it, and said: "I know indeed one draught of this suffices to extinguish all sense of misery experienced in the upper world, but as I am here to seek a termination to

the only misery I am there afflicted with, there is every reason why I should not drink."

Here, as he stood declining the proffered draught, rumours reached him of the new horror he must now approach, in the shape of Cerberus, the three-headed, three-throated monster, who close-guarded the porch to Pluto's realms, and who, as he shook the hundred chains which held him, and began to glare and bellow, made all who heard him quake with untold fear. Nevertheless, Orpheus is prepared for the utmost, and for the sake of his Eurydice he will front even this monster, though with a sense of horror he had never felt before. He advanced accordingly, involuntarily seized his harp, and in very anguish began to play. But he had no sooner touched the strings than the raging and bellowing ceased, and the monster, grown of a sudden all innocent and gentle as a lamb, began advancing towards him in a fawning attitude, withheld only by the limit of his chains.

Soothed and subdued thus, Orpheus passed and left him, and soon descried the palace of Pluto, and within it Pluto and his queen, seated each on a throne of ebony, and amazed both to see the approach of an actual living man. Him the dark king at once accosted. "How is it, rash one, thou hast come all unbidden into my kingdom?" Orpheus had at first no *words* to answer with, but immediately grasping his lyre, he proceeded to strike its chords, and there poured forth from it one unbroken stream of sounds, the purest utterance of the very soul of sorrow. And then, having attuned his spirit to the

sounds his lyre emitted, he raised his voice, and sang a lay of such passionate, tender sadness for his lost one, that over wide hell the torturers forgot their tormenting, and the tortured, their torments; and when he ended, Pluto and his queen were moved, nay, melted, and at once consented to his prayer. "Thy prayer," they said, "is granted. Not in vain hast thou made thy appeal for sympathy and help to us. Take with thee thy Eurydice back to the upper light. Thee, as thou returnest, she shall follow afoot; only beware thou look not once behind thee, till at least thou thyself hast fairly emerged from this nether-realm. Have the upper vault of the blue heavens first clear overhead before thou for once turn round. If thou suffer distrust, or anxiety, or affection, or longing to tempt thee to look behind thee, know and understand thy spouse returns again to us, and thou lovest her for ever." Whereupon Orpheus, full of gratitude, and at signal given, returned, retracing his footsteps, and making direct for the regions of the upper air.

Cerberus he subdued as when he entered, while the ferryman, as he approached, loudly greeted and welcomed him as a special favourite of the gods; for no one, he said, was ever let return again from the kingdom of Hades but such as the gods delighted to honour. And he immediately took him in, and conveyed him over, without either exaction or thought of the stipulated ferry-money.

Orpheus, when he landed, would fain have looked behind him; but he remembered the warning, and moved straight on. When he was in the deep

darkness of the passage upward, he heard and again heard, as it were, the sound of footsteps following, yet ventured he not to turn and look; only when he approached the upper entrance, and neared the light, and it seemed as though he heard the sound no longer, did he lose his self-command, and so forget himself as to look round and see. He saw indeed, alas! Eurydice was close behind him; but the moment he turned she shrank away, and swiftly vanished from his gaze. The nether-kingdoms had sucked her back again, and swallowed her up; one low, soft, whispering voice was all he heard her utter as she left him: "The rest of thy pilgrimage alone, O friend—adieu! adieu!"

Orpheus was all of a sudden smitten rigid, and stood as if petrified into horror, with his eyes, in fixed, ghastly stare, straining after her down the jaws of the abyss. At length, after a time, recovering from his stupor, in very despair he started forward, and again, a second time, actually, with quick, determined footstep, ventured down. On, and still on, he kept pressing, until he arrived at the very river of the under-world; but this time, by no praying or promising could he persuade Charon to take him in and bear him over. For long, weary seven days and seven nights continued he on the hither shore of the dark river, pleading and again pleading, but in vain. The ferryman was immovable, and he returned as he went to the upper-world again on the eighth day.

Soon as he regained the light, he made straight for the most desolate region in all his dominions,

there to cherish, meditate, and sing his grief, in nursing and uttering which alone lay henceforth all his pleasure. Yet here, though no joyful strain sounded any more from the strings of his lyre, or gay note poured itself from his erewhile "lightly-moved and all-conceiving spirit," the melodies he played were no less heart-affecting, and the spell they exercised was as wonderful as when at first his full soul sent streaming forth a universal music, and his hand swept feelingly all the chords. Now, as then, the beasts of the earth drew near; and the trees of the forest so crowded round him, that the spot he had chosen as his appropriate retreat of sorrow, though originally bare and desolate, was transformed into a shady, all-sheltering, and sacred grove. Here, from day to day and year to year, he lived lamenting, yet not unhonoured by such as knew that the soul which *sings* its sorrows loves the most. Not the bereaved only were drawn towards him, but all who anywhere had had experience of tender feeling, though they had never lost a single friend. Not a maiden, especially, who heard him but loved him, and would have given her days and nights to soothe his sorrows and cheer his heart. In vain: his wife, the only one he ever had, or could love, was taken from him; and none of all of them could ever supply her place and make him forget the sorrow he felt for her. Maidens and mothers of maidens alike were disappointed, and ere long unjustly construed his indifference towards them into an evidence that he despised all their race.



And it came to pass, in process of time, on the occasion of a festival lately established among the people in honour of Bacchus, the newly-admitted god of the vine, that the women of the district—as, inflamed with the fruit of it, they ranged wildly about, given over to every form of mirth and madness—came in their riot and revelling to the grove of Orpheus, and began calling aloud to one another, “Ho! here’s the man who despises us all alike. Come, let us have our revenge!” And hereupon, first one let fly a *thyrsus* at the singer, and another a stone; but, strange to say, both fell harmless at his feet; and so happened it with every other weapon they threw and attempt they made upon his life. Defeated thus in their attack, and outdone by the magic potency of his voice and lyre, they determined in their frenzy, by drowning both, to disarm him of the spell they exercised; and instantly commenced to overbear him with a whole army of shrill-sounding fifes and furiously-beaten tambourines. And now, when they had extinguished his music, and so disenchanted him of all power of resisting, they set fiercely upon him with every weapon that offered, wounding him sorely and slaying him outright.

But with even this vengeance they were not satisfied; for, after slaying him, they seized his dead body, tore it in pieces, and left the mangled limbs all lying scattered about. His head and harp they threw into the river Hebrus; and the story goes, that both, as they floated down on the quiet bosom of the stream, kept ever and anon

sounding in low yet distinct notes, "Eurydice ! Eurydice !" And the lyre, growing as it floated down ever larger and larger, and brighter and brighter, was seen slowly and majestically to rise from the river, ascend the heavens, and, with stars on the breast of it, form a constellation in the sky for ever. And the head was borne down the waters, and wafted over the seas to the island of Lesbos, where a monstrous serpent attempting to seize and swallow it, was, on the spot, turned by Apollo, who guarded it, into stone.

As for Orpheus himself, his spirit descended straight to the kingdom of the Shades, who live on under the sway of their sovereign, Pluto ; and here he was at once recognized for a friend by all who had before seen him and been moved by his music. All his miseries were now abolished by one full draught of the stream of Lethe ; and Pluto approvingly beckoned him into Elysium, the Garden of the Blessed, where, too, he would find his wife Eurydice had gone before him. He entered in, and Eurydice, the first to see him, ran to greet him ; and now they both love, and live a life together there inseparably, the bliss of which it is given to no one here on earth even to understand.





## II.

### *The Sleep of Endymion.*

**E**NDYMION was a heroic prince, the son of Aëthlios, the son of Zeus ; and so purely had the blood of the grandfather been transmitted to the grandchild, and so nobly had the grandchild maintained his high pedigree, that he is oftentimes represented, not as the grandson, but as the son ; just as the good son of a good man is, in Christian speech, no less a son of God than his godly father.

Both Endymion and Aëthlios had been, as their descendants continued to be, kings of Elis, in Greece ; and their alleged direct descent from Zeus was probably due to their zeal in the Olympic games, which used to be celebrated every four years in Elis in Zeus' name, and at which they had, again and again, in competition with all Greece, easily carried off the highest honours. At all events, the story goes that Endymion settled the succession to his kingdom upon that one of his sons who, on the Olympic course, should prove himself most capable of upholding the family credit ; and that he who, in this contest, came off victorious, actually succeeded

to the throne of his father. Raised to the sovereignty himself, as we may well suppose, by transcendent athletic prowess, he, like his father before him, had determined, as far as in him lay, to hand down the family name untarnished, and that no king should sit upon the throne of Elis who did not, like his ancestors and him, first of all approve himself to be a true son of Zeus. For those were days when no one could rise to authority, or kingship, without royal quality; as well as days when super-eminent ability was referred to deity, revered as sacred, and obeyed as divine. The *kingly* faculty—that, namely, which, as the derivation of the word “king” from *ken* and *can* teaches, pre-eminently knows and can—was the faculty without proof of which no one could then have risen to, or retained, command over others; and one which Endymion must have honoured as the highest, and himself possessed as not another in his kingdom.

But Endymion was not only a strong man—strong to see and resolute to dare and do; he was a man of a tender heart and a gentle bearing withal—a man to love, and be loved by others—that is, of quick, deep sympathy with his race. Which latter endowment, equally with that of strength, is part of the primary outfit indispensable in a king; for, to guide his people wisely, a king must first truly and deeply feel his people's wants. And this quality, not the least noble side of his kingly nature, Endymion appears to have inherited from his mother, as he did his strength from his father; and by her, as well as him, to have been directly related to the upper

powers. And here, too, it is curious to note how he is reputed at one time as the son of his mother, and at another, as the son of his grandmother: and with reason; for though, to the external eye, no two beings can appear more unlike than the old mother and the young, the ancient Greek mind saw clearly what the modern only laughs at the philosopher for pretending to see, that the two, to the senses literally as diverse as light and darkness, are, if not originally the same, so related as to derive their being from one another. And these two were reported to be,—the mother, *Protogencia*, the “*first-born*” of Night, or the Dawn; and the grandmother, who, as we say, is also the reputed mother, *Kalyke*, the all-“*covering*,” all-including Night herself. And so Endymion was conceived, at one time, as the son of the Dawn, and, at another, directly of the great teeming Night, of which the Dawn is the *first-begotten*; and his alleged immediate descent from both expresses the belief of his countrymen that he was endowed with the dark, silent, unfathomable, tender depth of the one, as well as the fresh, beaming, joyous hopefulness and buoyancy of the other—an all-promising, all-susceptible, all-capable, radiant young king.

And yet, with all his princely endowment and capability, it is noteworthy, history is wholly silent regarding all he said and did. Not, for all that, ought we to conclude that there was nothing to relate regarding him. The world owes infinitely more to those who have no history than to those who have; and the silent noble ones, who have



~~The Sign of Redemption.~~



*W. H. W. 1844*



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enriched and exalted it by their mere presence, form a much grander and greater host than those do whose names stand emblazoned in written story, and are the loud boast of all. To Endymion, therefore, the world may owe much, though of him, as the doer of it, there remains no history; nay, we may feel very sure that, unless the world's obligations to him had been very great, he would not have been celebrated in it for so long a time by name as the confessed son of such sovereign people.

The only fact which history records regarding him, is not an action which he performed, only an event which befell him, but an event not likely to happen to any one who was not all we have here described him. One fair lover kissed him to his rest; and ever since he lies, not dead, but sleeping—a sleep of eternal youth, beauty, and peace. This one fact of a historical nature the world remembers concerning him, for it refuses to believe that so much nobleness can, by possibility, have perished; but thinks of it as still living and breathing silently somewhere in the far, yet near, land of dreams. Piously did the early nations of the world so construe it; and truly, for what the Maker sends us remains mysteriously with us after the bearer of it is dead and gone; and we, as we “mourn over, long for, and love distant and departed” goodness, are more embraced and possessed by it than we were when it was present with us only in the flesh, and we could look upon it and handle it. The noble ones who have lived among us, have not left us; they only truly came to us

when they departed, and they were then first kissed by us into immortality. "The week-day man, who was one of us, has put on the garment of Eternity, and become radiant and triumphant. In the death of a good man, Eternity is seen looking through 'Time,' and that which once only *was*, now first *is*—*is* for ever.

The sleep of Endymion, which proved his last, is, as has been said, the one remembered fact in all his history; and this, the tradition tells us, is the way the event befell. One day, Endymion, still young, turned aside wearied, towards nightfall, to sleep the night away on the slopes of Latmos, or Hill of Concealment. It was an evening of infinite stillness and golden beauty. There was no stir in the air, no rustle among the leaves, hum of insects even or any murmuring sound, except it were the murmur as of eternity, seen rather than heard, in the overflowing river which almost bathed the sleeper's feet. All nature on the earth around and in the air above, rich and gorgeous in hue and form, had lulled itself to sleep beside him, as if in sympathy with the slumberous torpor which had stolen over him. It was the very valley of peace; and he, the sleeper, after infinite longing, had here found a still, though narrow, haven of rest, where he would rather sleep for ever than venture forth again on the too thankless, bootless battle of life.

And now here, as he lay with all nature reposing in still sympathy around him, and unvisited by any human eye or footstep, a maiden might be seen, had there been any witness near, descending to—

wards him, her eye and heart drawn to the beautiful form which lay before her. Nearer and nearer she approached, and softer and softer; and as she loved him tenderly, yet dared not and would not tarry beside him, she awoke him as she stood over him, beckoned to him and besought him to accompany her into farther lands and wider expanses. But the heart of Endymion was full and satisfied; he had known all it was good for him to know already, and was content to have at length found a sequestered valley of peace; so he would not listen, and refused to go. If he might not remain where he was, he would rather die than leave it, even with her; and so Selene, or Diana, for such was the maiden's name, kissed and embraced him, and his youthful, beautiful form sunk gently into eternal sleep.





### III.

#### The Tale of the Beautiful Psyche.

**P**SYCHE was a maiden of royal degree and matchless beauty. Her sisters, of whom she had two, though themselves beautiful, had no beauty at all to be compared to hers. She was the wonder of wonders, and the wonder of all. Great people and noble people and wise people came from all lands, far as well as near, to behold and admire her; and all, as they departed, returned only to celebrate their own wonder, not—for that was impossible—to describe her glory. Venus, they even said, they knew only as a tradition and an image, *she* was a reality; Venus might have appeared to others, not to them; and no picture of Venus equalled the beauty they had seen alive in *her*.

Yet far and wide as her fame spread itself, and deep and genuine as was the admiration she created, no one who visited her ever sought to woo her, or make offers to her father for her hand. Her sisters were married long ago to distant princes, while she remained at home unmatched and single, and was like to do so all her days. The thought of this, though it did not trouble her, oppressed her father

sorely, and threatened soon to bring down his gray hairs with sorrow to the grave. That his lovely Psyche should be left alone behind him, ununited and undefended, and she and the kingdom which went along with her exposed a prey to the thousand and one enemies who, for the sake of it, would be ready to spoil her, was his continual heavy care and burden by night and day—an incessant tormenting anxiety, from which he could by no device escape. The very uncertainty of her fate was so intolerable, that he resolved, rather than endure it longer, to leave his kingdom and essay at once a pilgrimage to a far-off diviner, who was understood to know all secrets, and might be expected therefore to know hers.

Thitherward, accordingly, with only one or two faithful domestics for escort, he at once took his departure, and arriving safely, he with them consulted the old wise man. "Would any one be found," he asked, "to wed his daughter Psyche; and was he himself to see her married before he died?" The seer kindly referred to his oracles, and soon learned the secret of Psyche's fate. But no sooner did he know it than he wished he had not; and with him, as with Jeremiah and Cassandra, was his deeper insight a deeper woe. Fain would he have hid the revelation of the oracle from the poor father, but to do so after consulting it, the fates forbade. "Poor father," he said, "thy daughter has incurred the jealousy and hatred of Venus by her transcendent beauty, and for this is Venus determined to gratify on her her revenge. To

Cupid, her son, she has given Psyche over; and the charge she has laid upon him is to enkindle in her breast a passion for a dreadful monster, to whom she has doomed her to become the wife. In a month hence must thou, therefore, lead thy daughter forth from thy city, clad as a bride, conduct her as far as the summit of the Dragonstone, which is close beside thee, and there leave her, thou and thy people, to her fate." At this the father sank senseless into the arms of his attendants, and the prophet, rising up, retired, sadly murmuring, "How willingly would I help it, if I could."

Great was the horror which pervaded the city, when the father, bent down with grief and pale with agony, returned home with the decree of fate against his daughter. Father, mother, and she did nothing for the month they were allowed to be together but smite the forehead, wring the hands, and fill the palace with sobs and ever-renewed wailing. In vain the courtiers send and try to tempt diviners elsewhere to come, Balaam-like, for a consideration, and reverse the oracle of fate; no one, however tempted, would so much as saddle his ass and come. And so the fated day arrived, when Psyche, clad as a bride, was led forth to her doom like a lamb to the slaughter. All the city followed her in long-drawn, sad procession, every bosom deeply moved with sorrow for the maiden and sympathy for the heavy-laden, sorely-afflicted old father. Slow and solemn was the progress of the procession, and heart-rending was the anguish of all when, as it reached its destination, the father had to part for

ever from his beloved child. The parting over, all returned speedily homewards; the father to his sorrows, and the rest to their speculations regarding the fate of Psyche, whom they had left standing on the summit like a monument erect against the sky. There she still stood, as the last of the returning multitude that had accompanied her disappeared within the gates of the city; but when they looked to the spot in the morning, her figure had vanished from it for ever, and no one the least knew what had befallen her.

What had become of her? When all had left her, and no eye was upon her, and while she stood pale with anguish and rigid with fear, she heard a low, soft whispering voice calling, and again calling, her name. "Have courage; have courage, Psyche!" she heard the voice appealing to her; "cast thee down into my arms, and I will bear thee to the secret dwelling of my master. I am Zephyr, the gentle spirit of the west wind." Psyche at first drew back with shrinking, but persuaded at last by the tender softness of the voice, she gained confidence, and threw herself over the cliff by one bold leap into Zephyr's arms. And Zephyr caught her up, and bore her away all unconscious, until, gently landing her, she awoke to find herself seated on a soft flowery lawn extended in front of a palace of most gorgeous splendour. Her amazement was infinite, and she knew not for long what to make of it—whether all she now saw and had just passed through, might not, after all, be but a mere illusion from the land of dreams.



After a time, however, recovering from her bewilderment, she arose and approached the palace. Finding the doors of it open, she ventured in and surveyed it; all was one unending panorama of princely magnificence and stately comfort. Nothing eye or heart of woman could desire was wanting: the whole was of the richest material, wrought into the most varied, delicate, and graceful shapes which art could devise. No one was to be seen within the palace, or in the gardens round, yet was the air full of spirits, each one of which was there to do Psyche's bidding and supply her wants. Everything was shaped to anticipate, and every service was at hand to meet her wishes, and hers only. It was Cupid's palace, designed, furnished, and decorated expressly for her sole use and to her sole honour. For Cupid, instead of delivering her over to the monster to which she had been doomed by the jealousy of Venus, had himself been smitten with her charms, resolved to have her as his own wife, and created this fairy region of softness and splendour to be her sacred, secret, and inviolable home.

All, as we have said, was devised to anticipate and meet Psyche's wishes; and to all her inquiries, as well as wants, the response of her unseen ministers was prompt and pointed. Yet one question they would not or could not answer; and, though to her anxious solicitude regarding her whereabouts, their frank reply was, "In the palace of thy husband," no one was able or willing to satisfy her naturally greatest anxiety regarding *him*—"who he was," they

would not or could not tell. This, she was made to understand, was the one desire she must be content to suppress ungratified—the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil to her of which she must not eat; for the instant she suffered her curiosity on this point to master her, that moment her beautiful Armida palace vanished, and her happiness and peace were gone.

Cupid regularly visited her as his wife every evening, and as regularly left her before the dawn. On the evening of his first visit, which was her first in the palace, he spoke to her so mildly and sweetly that he soon overcame all the fear and suspicion she naturally felt of his being, mayhap, the dreadful monster to which the old diviner had pronounced her doomed. With one thing, he said, she must content herself—to have him beside her only during the dark hours of the night, as his business required his absence from earliest dawn to latest dusk by day; but he promised, in compensation for the isolation and loneliness in which he left her, to entertain her every evening, for as long as she chose to listen, with the story of each day's adventures; "For," added he, "I see and hear more in a single day than I could relate to you, even if you should be willing to listen to me, the whole night through." Day by day, therefore, did Psyche enjoy her paradise, and night by night did Cupid charm her with his wondrous tales; and thereby was she able, though all unseeing and unseen, to live continually in most intimate mystic union with the secret history of all the world.

Meanwhile her parents, in their ignorance of her fate and apprehension of the worst, ceased not day nor night to vex their souls with sorrow ; and her two sisters, hearing what had befallen them, were come from their distant homes to comfort them and lament along with them. One day the two resolved to ascend the Dragonstone together, there by wailing to appease the angry goddess who had taken their sister from them, and purify themselves with grief. This design of theirs was known to Cupid, and by him revealed the evening after to his wife. "Now," continued he, "the Dragonstone, though invisible from this, is nigh at hand, and thy sisters' voices therefore thou needs must hear; but their appeals thou must steel thyself against, otherwise, be warned, to thee and me *mischief* will surely come." To this Psyche gave her promise, but only tormented herself all next day on account of her rash engagement. "Better were I dead," she thought, "than living, even in paradise, bound to hold myself entirely incommunicative with my kindred, and without liberty to send my very parents even a word that might console and comfort them." She instantly sulked and saddened in consequence, and would for one whole day neither eat nor drink nor be soothed. Her husband in the evening at once noticed her mood, and, on ascertaining the reason, to please her, yielded, as to similar arguments most husbands that love their wives weakly do. "Only," he added, "thou must religiously promise not to allow them, working on thy curiosity, to tempt thee to pry into the secret I

keep from thee regarding myself." To this Psyche joyfully consented, and vowed that, being abundantly satisfied with and assured of the love he bore her, she had no wish to know how he looked, content to think that one so loving must himself be lovely.

True to their purpose, her sisters next morning ascended the Dragonstone, and in loud, responsive wail began to call and again call their sister's name. Psyche, all ear, quickly heard them, ran forth from the palace, and to their calls of "Where?" answered with a rapt and joyful "Here!" "Where art thou, our sister?" they called again; and Psyche again replied, "Here, my loved ones! Only throw yourselves down into my servant's arms, he will bear you to my bosom and heart." And straightway the sisters did so, and the faithful Zephyr bore them, to awake with rapturous kisses of welcome in Psyche's arms.

Psyche led them over the palace, showed them what were its riches, and caused them to taste in succession of its sweets. Great was the surprise of the sisters, but what chiefly filled them with astonishment was the mysterious manner in which everything was done and provided by invisible hands. The sight of all this, far from being, as it surely ought, a grateful one to them, only stirred up their evil natures, and enkindled against their sister all manner of envy and ill-will. "But *who*," at length said the eldest, "is this husband of thine?" Psyche at first tried to evade the question altogether, but, being hard pressed, at length replied carelessly,

"He is young, handsome, and wise-hearted. He would certainly please you, could you see him; but this you cannot do, for, what with the hunt and other sports of the field, it is always eventide before he returns home." And with this she suddenly changed the subject, hastened off, brought each a rich memorial of their visit, and urged their instant departure, as, by delaying longer, her afflicted parents might give them also up for lost, and be ready to die. Quickly, therefore, she hurried with them from the palace; and Zephyr, ever faithful to his mistress's wishes, took them up and bore them back to the Dragonstone in like manner as they came.

Soon as the two awoke to consciousness again on the Dragonstone, all the envy and ill-will they felt at the sight of their sister's good fortune awoke along with them. They could not bear to think that their younger sister, whom, for long too, no one coveted to have for wife, should appear to have so far surpassed them in the possession of all the lust of the eye and the pride of life; and they affected to see in her nobler bearing and simple desire to satisfy her anxious parents that it was well with her, proof of a disposition to exalt herself over them on the ground of greater grandeur, more honour, and higher rank. All she had displayed and given, they ascribed to vanity and pride; and so, instead of returning to gladden their parents with the news of what they had seen and the sight of what they had brought for token, they cruelly turned aside to secrete the presents she had given

them, and went back to their afflicted parents, hypocritically lamenting that they had sorrowed and sought for their lost sister all day long in vain. Having thus deepened, instead of dispelled their parent's grief, they left them to sorrow on, and returned each to the distant city of her husband, there to meditate new devices for poor Psyche's ruin.

Time passed on, and Psyche was again apprized by her husband of the contemplated return of her sisters to the Dragonstone. Once more she was allowed to receive and entertain them in Cupid's palace, but expressly warned as before against being tempted to pry into what she well understood she must not seek to know. "To-morrow they come," said he; "but I dread them, I vow to thee, as I dread destruction and the terrors that possess the jaws of Orcus itself." Psyche, however, was not without excuse for thinking better of her own kindred, and she naturally thought herself proof against any temptation to mistrust him.

Her sisters, accordingly, came next day to the Dragonstone, as Cupid had predicted. Psyche heard them, and Zephyr, at her command, bore them down again to her side. This visit seemed as sisterly and affectionate on their part as the former, and Psyche thought them solely and wholly interested in her weal, and indeed regarded them as kind heavenly messengers coming and going between her and her parents, to gladden both her and them. They were not long with her, however, when they maliciously renewed their old inquiries

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about her husband; and she, forgetful of the account she gave of him before, put them off by representing him this time as a man in his prime, who was for most part away from home doing merchandise. And thereupon she quickly turned away, partly to hide her shame at deceiving them, and partly that she might fetch them each another present, which, as she pressed upon them, she urged them to be off, led them forth, and called to Zephyr, who bore them back as they came.

The sisters, as they returned home to the house of their father, whom previously to this visit to Psyche they had not gone to see, talked together over this new interview, and both concluded that her story about her husband must be all either a pure invention, or a mere device to hide from them an ignorance regarding him she was unwilling to confess. That she did not know him at all was their final conviction; and they agreed together to return next day to tempt her to do what would bring all uncertainty in regard to him to an end.

Next day, accordingly, they returned to the Dragonstone, renewed their wailing, were heard by Psyche, and by Zephyr as heretofore wafted down; but this time they came with reddened eyes, torn raiment, and the symbols of excessive grief. "So soon," said they, "have we again come back to thee, because we could not endure that thou shouldst remain in ignorance another moment of the horror which, ever since yesterday we heard of it, has torn and nigh broken our very hearts. Thy husband is

indeed the monster thou so dreadedst, and has been seen by the peasants around, a dragon of portentous cruelty and thirst for human blood. It is known to all he keeps thee for the present as his spouse; but by-and-by, when by dainty feeding he has fattened thee, he will make of thee a sweet morsel, and swallow thee at one gulp." In this relation the one confirmed the other, and they so wrought upon poor Psyche that she, believing it, could only exclaim in terror,—“ Help! sisters, help! What boots it to tell me my misery if ye cannot show me how I may escape.” “ That we can,” they answered, reassuringly. “ Provide thee a large sharp sword, which hide beside thee in thy bed; and a burning lamp, which conceal in thy bed-chamber; and when sleep steals on and overpowers the monster beside thee, arise, seize thee thy lamp in one hand and thy knife in the other, and there and then sunder swift and sheer his head from his body.” With which advice the sisters departed, repairing each straight to the court of her husband, hoping by distance to eschew any evil consequences to themselves which might result from their counsel, should Psyche adopt it.

Psyche they left in indescribable distraction and anguish of mind. At one time she recalled the mild and gentle ways and tones of her husband, his tender concern shown by night and by day for her welfare, and, above all, his deeply interested and interesting human talk; and at another time she thought of the absence of any reason why her sisters should invent a tale entirely without foundation.



Abundant private reason she had for believing that her husband, in spite of all rumour, must be all- lovely and beautiful; but she suffered the voice of it to overbear and quench her own experience, and fatally resolved to accept the advice of her sisters, and unbelievably to *subject unseen love to the test of mortal vision.*

Against night-time, accordingly, everything was got ready by Psyche as her sisters had advised her, lamp and sword together. Cupid, all unsuspecting, came as usual and lay beside her; and after entertaining her for a time with the loving tale of that day's wonders, at length fell fast asleep by her side. She, who had only pretended to have fallen asleep before him, watched her opportunity, and slipped quickly and quietly out of bed. Trembling with emotion, she seized the knife, and brought forth the lamp from where it lay, ready burning, but covered up. Before her she espied a golden bow and a quiver full of arrows; and upon the couch there lay extended no hideous monster, but a youth of divinest beauty, in the softest slumber. For a time Psyche stood still before him, entranced and gazing; but gradually she drew softly nearer and nearer to view him better and gloat over his lovely form, when, alas! as she extended the uplifted lamp more and more over him, a drop of its seething oil fell burning upon his naked shoulder, and the sleeping god, shrinking with pain, at once awoke. Up he started on the instant, grasped his bow and arrows, unfolded his wings, and was flying off, when Psyche, dropping her lamp and weapon,

seized hold of him, and clung to him, as if to stay him and keep him fast. The youth, however, only raised his wings, mounted aloft, and carried her away with him.

Psyche held on by him, till, upon dawn of morning, he let her softly down upon a far-off meadow and prepared to fly away. But he could not leave her, for he still loved her, without one short parting word to comfort and guide her in view of what she must now expect to undergo. "Know," said he, "now at length, that he whom thou hadst for husband is Cupid, the son of Venus, from whose vengeance I have screened thee by making thee my wife. For thy distrust of me I punish thee not otherwise than by my flight; only I am no more able to protect thee against the designs of my mother." And herewith Cupid left her, vanishing, all invisible, into void air.

Psyche's misery hereupon was unbounded, and for long time after, in her despair, she sat smiting her forehead and wringing her hands. At length, her agony grown intolerable, she started to her feet, rushed frantically straight before her, and, coming up to the bank of a deep-rolling river, threw herself with desperate plunge into its dark abyss. But, strange to say, she sank not, for the spirit of the stream, who was there to guard her, caught her up and carried her downwards, till he landed and left her on a bank of flowers. Here she sat for some time musing, with her eyes steadfastly fixed on the ground before her; but after a while, slowly raising them, her dreaminess left her, when she saw beside

her, surrounded by his flock, an old goat-herd, busily making for himself, from the reeds of the river, a Pan's pipe. The old man's eyes met hers as she looked at him, and he only said, "Ill-fated maiden, for this must thou suffer and make atonement; yet, forward, and patience, for thou shalt survive the end." Psyche, rising up, bowed reverently, and having thanked him, resolutely walked on.

It so happened that the first place she after this approached in her rueful wanderings was the city of the husband of her elder sister, to whom, as was natural, she at once repaired. Great was her sister's astonishment at Psyche's arrival, and still greater when, on inquiry, she learned the cause. "The advice you gave me," she said, "I saw good to follow, and I know now to my cost what and who was the husband fate had given me. I have in consequence fatally offended him; he has cast me off and left me, and he vows he will be avenged on me by wooing and wedding you." These words Psyche spoke to her half satirically, half vindictively, but certainly with no intent to bring about the fatal catastrophe in which unhappily they issued. For no sooner had she left, than her sister, tempted by the prospect of being Cupid's wife, and so the envied mistress of all his treasures, and vainly thinking herself not undeserving of such good fortune and high honour, began foolishly, as well as faithlessly, to think in her lustful impatience how to compel a love which will surely come to us if we loyally wait for it, but never if we hasten it.

Accordingly, she represented to her husband that she had just received tidings of the death of her mother, and of the deep grief into which the sad event had plunged her aged father, and prayed him to suffer her absence for a time, while, in obedience to her filial instincts, she sought to soothe his sorrows and comfort his old heart. Her husband was not the man to say nay to a desire breathing such true natural piety, and so he at once approvingly consented, and she departed. But instead of repairing to the city of her parents, she made direct for the Dragonstone, ascended the summit, and there commenced longingly to call aloud the name of Cupid, as she had erewhile in feigned accents so often called that of Psyche. "Bid me welcome," she cried; and echo answering, "Welcome," down she threw herself in a rapture of emotion; but this time no Zephyr waited to receive her, bear her away, and lay her softly down as before on Cupid's bed of roses. On the rocks she fell, was dashed in pieces, and her mangled carcass remained for a time to feed the raven and the vulture.

Psyche, meanwhile, wandered on, now, as throughout, not unguided by a higher arm, and so came next to the city of her other sister, told her the same story, awoke in her the same longing, and allured her to the same fate. She too mistook hunger for affection, and was vain enough to think herself not undeserving of what she had but the capacity of wishing. Thus both perished, by no fault of Psyche's, or the Upper Powers' by whom she was guided, but because they knew not this great

spiritual secret, that having is in no case the fruit of lusting, but of living. They trusted they could live *enchanted* lives, and were lost. As for Psyche, her wanderings still continued; but the path she followed, though hard and toilsome, was, because a real one, a path which led her to her journey's end. Long, winding, arduous, perplexed and obstructed, it was yet a road; and a road, because she who walked on it had a fixed human purpose to accomplish, which, as such, continued to the end her guiding heavenly star. And that purpose was to do and endure the utmost for love's sake—to reconcile herself to and recover the affection of him she had lost.

On, therefore, she wandered, everywhere seeking her beloved by passionate appeal to him, and promise of all manner of things if he would only return to her side and heart. But by no regretting, repenting, or vowing to do better, could she win him round and bring him back to her; and yet, though by this means she could not reconcile him, she was prepared to accept and submit to any other course by which she might likelier succeed. Accordingly, though in this way she did not prosper, she did not despair, but with fixed purpose pressed on.

Her course onward for long lay more than ever over rough places, and by steep and steeper, narrow and narrower paths, while she nourished herself on berries and wild-fruits, and slept night after night on the soft moss-beds under the trees, until at length, after traversing dense intricate

forests, clambering along the verge of dangerous precipices, and toiling with wearied limb and torn raiment up sheer inaccessible heights, she emerged on a high lying, far extending plateau. She soon discovered herself to be in a world of new wonders, and the district of it on which she entered was one of the richest fertility and the highest culture, the fields of which stood waving with yellow corn, all ready for the sickle of the reaper. But what was Psyche's surprise when, as she approached the fields, she found the ears of corn all of gold, and the exact model of those provided by Nature for the food of her children. Field after field, it was throughout the same; and by-and-by, as she proceeded, she observed the harvest had begun, though there was no reaper visible. It pained her, as she came up to the spot, to find the corn in handfuls, and the reaping implements, lying scattered about in wild disorder over the face of the field. Her innate love of order was so offended that she instinctively turned aside and commenced with her own hands to sunder and arrange the confusion; and that too, though, in the distance, a lordly palace, not unlike her husband's, allured her on.

Here, as she was busily engaged in the work of order, her ear was startled by a strange sound near her as of the flapping of wings; when, on raising herself, and looking up, she descried a chariot, drawn by dragons, hovering downwards towards the shining palace which stood in front, where it stopped. When the chariot alighted there stepped out of it a lady of queenly presence, who turned

towards Psyche with graceful, stately movement, and drew near. Her head was decked with a wreath of full ears of corn, similar to those Psyche had been sorting in the field; while she carried in her right hand a silver sickle with golden handle, and in her left a few ripe poppy-heads. She wore a look of dignified seriousness, and her accents, as she opened her lips and addressed Psyche, breathed at once the tenderness of a mother of children, and the earnestness of one of the ruling powers of the world. "Psyche," she said, for she knew her, "infatuated maiden, what can have tempted thee to trust thyself here and venture forward thus into the region of the upper gods. Surely thou knowest not the offence thou hast given them through thy distrust of Cupid, and the anxiety they all feel for him ever since thou didst so wantonly inflict that sore wound. For all wounds, however slight, which a god receives in mortal form from mortal hands need long careful nursing, and are stubborn and slow of cure; and no god, when so wounded, can deliver himself from the form he may have at the time happened to assume till the cure is complete. Venus, his mother, all anxiety about him, has him with her in her palace, where she herself with her own hands dresses the wound, and, almost broken-hearted, watches his couch sleeplessly both by night and day. The wrath she cherishes towards thee is intense and unappeasable, and upon thee, for this and thy former rivalry with her, she is determined to execute to the full her fell revenge. She has emissaries forth on all hands to

find and fetch thee; and here thou comest into her very presence, and wilt most certainly be all unable to avert thy doom! Poor Psyche, I tremble for thee; all the pity my heart bears in it is surely thine."

At this Psyche took courage, and, with every expression of regret and promise of amendment, began to pray her to take her under her protection, and even to intercede for her with the goddess under whose displeasure she now lay. Ceres, or the Earth-mother, for it was she Psyche now appealed to, could do nothing to help her as against Venus. Her dominion extended only over the fruits of the earth, and her connection with Venus was so intimate that she could not in any way shelter or patronize her enemy. Psyche, therefore, must depart with all despatch, and look to herself alone for any help there might be out of her impending troubles. Nevertheless, Psyche resolved to go and try what help, if any, there might yet lie in store for her elsewhere.

Desponding at first, in consequence, she did not by any means despair, but wandered on, not without a strong but silent conviction that the gods had nowise cast her off, but still felt for her in their hearts, and would not suffer her to be finally lost. She did not, therefore, seek to quit the region she had so boldly entered, but only turned her steps in a different direction and walked on. She had not gone far, accordingly, when she came in sight of another palace and environment of still richer splendour, the residence unmistakably of one of



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the greater gods. This, too, in her deep distress, Psyche dared to approach, determined to leave no god unsolicited, and risk the utmost to, if possible, obtain a promise of sympathy and succour from some god. She had hardly entered the precincts of this domain when the palace-doors flew open, and forth there issued from the porch a goddess, with a diadem of brilliants upon her forehead, and drawn in a chariot by two stately-stepping peacocks. This was the lady Juno, the high queen of all the gods, who also, when she saw Psyche, approached and accosted her, curious to know what had emboldened her to advance so near. "The unhappiest of mortals," was the answer, "presumes to implore thy benign protection against the undeserved persecution of thy servant Venus." To this appeal the goddess only listened with a look of gravity; but neither in her was there help for Psyche, only pity and good-will. Juno, the special guardian divinity of the sovereign authority of mothers, would not interfere between a mother and her daughter-in-law, and that mother the wife of Vulcan, her own son; and poor Psyche, defeated thus in her appeals to the supreme goddesses of both earth and heaven, now first realized the awful exigency of her situation, and felt the necessity of bravely preparing to front the inevitable, by throwing herself at once into the hands of her adversary. The gods would, but could not help her; and what therefore remained for her but to seek out her enemy and throw herself for mercy at her feet.

Accordingly, girding herself up to the utmost to

face the doom she now clearly saw awaited her, and fortifying herself with the assurance given her of the good-will of the gods, she resolutely arose and deliberately advanced into the presence of Venus. This was a great—properly the greatest—moment in Psyche's life, when, reconciling herself to Necessity, she was able with clearness of purpose to say, "Well, let the will of the gods be done."

The region of Venus was one of smiling beauty, gay with myrtles and roses, and rich in all manner of sensual delights and delicacies. In the midst of it, also, rose a lordly palace, with a still blue lake in front of it, on the mirror-like surface of which floated gracefully four snow-white swans. All the trees were in flower, and the groves were vocal with the songs of bright birds, with which alternated from time to time the gentle, soft cooing of doves. Venus, who appeared on the scene just as Psyche entered it, rode forth in a chariot of her husband, Vulcan's, workmanship, drawn by four of her favourite birds. The chariot drew up at the door of the palace, and the goddess alighting, advanced towards Psyche, who stood before her with downcast countenance and pale as death. At first she scanned her with a look of haughty inquiry, and at length perceiving who she was, exploded upon her in a loud, heartless, scornful peal of laughter. "Eh! indeed, what an unexpected honour this is, to be sure! Ha! ha! ha!" and she laughed again and again.

By-and-by, waxing fierce and even savage in her manner, she in shrill rage flew at her victim, seized her by the hair, beat her and shook her; and, as she

did so, at intervals she shrieked out, "Thou shalt smart for this yet ; this very night expect a foretaste of what awaits thee." With this she turned and called aloud : "Ho, Grief and Anxiety, hither ! here is work for you ; do it now with a will." This the two were not slow to do, for they instantly obeyed the summons and set to work. Psyche they at once fell upon, seizing her roughly and dragging her after them into a dungeon under the palace, where they unmercifully scourged and abused her in every conceivable manner of way. This the two tormentors continued doing the whole night long thereafter ; and to Psyche it seemed as though the morning light, which was to bring release to her, would never come.

On the morrow, when at length it dawned, Psyche was brought forth from the dungeon into the presence of her enemy, and now for the first time given to know through what manner of penance her mistress required her to pass. Venus, into whose presence she was at once ushered, sat in state within the great hall of her palace, all prepared to pronounce on her victim the sentence she had resolved upon, and she proceeded to deliver it in the same heartless tone as when she first accosted her. "I hear," she said, "thou art of an orderly, industrious turn, and I, having at the present moment need of such an one, am minded to put thy so celebrated faculty to the proof. My grain-stores are now in the most entire disorder, and the whole, from this single cause, doomed to inevitable, hopeless waste. There," pointing to the store, "the

grain-treasures lie in one indiscriminate heap ; set thee now to work among them, and let me see each kind apart by set of sun. If thou succeed in this, then do I promise to own thee for my daughter-in-law, and exact no further service of thee than may be necessary to ensure the complete recovery of my son. Thy destiny is in thy own keeping. Here work it out." And immediately Psyche was led into the granary and shown her task.

Barley, wheat, maize, rice, peas, beans, &c., lay there, filling the store-house, and jumbled together in the most perfect confusion. There was work to occupy any one busily for months, and the whole was given to Psyche to finish in one short day. She looked at the task before her with dismay, and sat down in utter helplessness and wept. She had not wept long, however, when she was startled to hear the sound of an exceeding small voice close beside her calling her name. She looked, but could see no creature near her except a tiny ant. "Who calls?" she asked. "I," said the little lady, and continued, "Me, no doubt, thou hast long forgotten, but I have not forgotten thee. Once when thy servant would have shaken me from a rose she carried, and trampled me to death, thou didst interpose and save my life. Could I now serve thee as thou didst then save me, how happy would I be?" "Kind heart," answered Psyche, "thanks to thee; 'tis little thou canst do to help me. This," she added, pointing to her work, "is what I have laid upon me to do, and my life is the stake which goes if I fail." "And herein precisely it lies in my

power to help thee. I have thousands of kinsfolk who will be proud to do thee any service. Have courage, then, thou saviour of my life, and hope." Saying which, her antship retired, and quickly returned—a perfect host along with her. Industriouslly did the little creatures set to work, and before nightfall, so diligently did they go through with it, and so wisely did Psyche direct their movements, the work was done. Full of gratitude, Psyche thanked, and again thanked, the little host, but their generous leader waived the compliment and protested she still stood, and would for ever remain, in Psyche's debt. The little ant was the Genius of industry, and the gratitude she felt towards Psyche was the reflection of the sense of the infinite indebtedness of all true workers to the sovereign helpful wisdom and method ministered by the Soul.

Soon after the ants had withdrawn, Venus came into the court, and great, it may well be imagined, was her astonishment to find the work done. *Done* she could not but allow it to be, only it was clear enough, she said, no utmost human diligence was able singly to execute so much without higher help. Psyche, however, she remanded again into safe keeping, and bade her await her pleasure against to-morrow, as she had another still more difficult service to exact of her, which was rendered necessary by the still precarious state of Cupid's wound. After a night of troubled slumber, Psyche, when she awoke, was led forth by Venus to a pinnacle of her palace, and shown, on the rim of the horizon, a forest which there extended itself along the banks

of a broad river. Thither must Psyche journey for her life, and fetch thence that very evening a lock of wool from the fleece of the golden-yellow sheep which grazed upon the banks, as without it the wound of Cupid would not heal.

This simpler looking enterprise Psyche at once essayed, not, however, without suspicion that it must be more difficult than it seemed. Onward, notwithstanding, she went, and halted not till she arrived at the river, but nowhere could she descry anything of the golden-fleeced flock she was in quest of, and she knew not whither to turn. Yet was Psyche, in her sore embarrassment, not shut up, as another might, in a feeling of sole concern for herself, but her heart was open to sympathize with, and her hand ready to relieve by the way, another's distress. A little fish was spluttering and floundering about in a small splash formed by the river when in flood, and in a few hours longer the water would disappear and the fish be dead. Psyche's eye was attracted and her heart moved. Her own difficulties had taught her sympathy with those of others; and so, stooping down, she lifted it up and gently returned it to its native waters, where, after wriggling its gratitude near the surface, it shot under, and soon disappeared. Here, as Psyche stood gazing after it, her ear was arrested by a low-spoken whisper from among the reeds on the brink of the river, and, as she listened, she recognised it as a voice addressed to her. "Kind soul," it said, "who would not help thee? Know, then, it is death thou goest to meet. These sheep thou art in

search of grow furious at mid-day, and the wounds they then inflict on men are mortal. Therefore have a care, conceal thyself in the thickets; and, when they have spent their rage and gone to rest exhausted beside the river, then sally forth from thy hiding-place, and thou shalt find the golden wool thou seekest in plenty on the bark of the trees and the thorns." Psyche found it all happened as the voice had told her; but the sun had declined half way from the meridian towards its setting, before she was able to find the wool she had come for. But as soon as she found it, she concealed it carefully in her bosom, and returned back. Before sunset she reached the palace, and placed the wool she had collected in Venus' hands,

The goddess seemed the reverse of satisfied to see this toil also finished, and only forewarned Psyche of another she must undertake on the morrow. When the morrow came, Psyche was led, as before, into the presence of her mistress, to learn the new labour in store for her. Venus pointed her to mountains on the verge of the horizon, and required her to fetch a flask of the black water which she would find issuing from a well on the further side, as this too was necessary for the cure of the wound her idle curiosity and weak distrust had caused to Cupid. After which, only one other enterprize would be demanded of her; which done, she would at once recognise her as her daughter-in-law, and Cupid's wife.

To this new task Psyche forthwith addressed

herself, but it was mid-day before she reached the ridge of the mountains, on the further side of which flowed the black water-spring she sought for. This, after descending a little way, she soon descried ; but only where it issued from the rock could she obtain the water, for the earth swallowed it up again nearly as soon as it appeared. The way which led to it was a steep and narrow one, overhanging sheer a frightful abyss, while to right and left of the spring itself lay two ever-wakeful dragons spouting fire. Still Psyche would make the attempt to reach it, and thought best to try clambering down upon it from above. Here her ear was suddenly arrested by sounds of hissing and feeble cries of terror. Upon which, she stood still and looked around, when she saw close beside her the nest of an eagle, in which lay cowering two young ones still unfledged, and in the neighbourhood a serpent of enormous size on the very point of seizing and devouring them. Her indignation was at once aroused ; and so, raising on the instant the staff she carried, she smote the monster and sent it rolling over into the abyss. At this very moment the parent eagle flew up—the bird of Jupiter, sent no doubt by him at this crisis to Psyche's help ; and, out of gratitude to her, he offered, if she would trust him with the flask she carried, to bring her the water she was in quest of from the black well. Psyche, knowing and trusting well the feeling which prompted the eagle to volunteer this service, handed the flask to him, and he floated down with it in his beak. He soon returned with it full of the sacred water, and Psyche,



receiving it with no end of thanks, hurried back with it to the court of her mistress.

This time Venus welcomed her with a slight show of satisfaction, and assured her that she would require of her only one other task, and that, when it was finished, she would at once receive her into her confidence, and give Cupid back again to her heart. It was necessary for her to entertain all due reverence for her husband's mother, and to prove the existence of this feeling, she must be willing to descend on her behalf into the under-world itself. The queen thereof possessed, it was alleged, a charm to be obtained from no one else, by which wasted and spent beauty could be restored. The beauty of Venus had suffered from the vexation her son's wound had caused her, and the care and watching requisite on her part before it could be healed. Towards its restoration, after such protracted anxiety and nursing, Psyche must undertake a mission to the nether-kingdoms, and obtain from Proserpina the means necessary to charm it back.

Venus called Psyche to herself next day accordingly, put into her hands a golden box, and urged her to be off immediately, and use all despatch. That very instant Psyche started; and so eagerly did she press forward, that only the intricacy and dense gloom of a forest her way lay through, compelled her to halt even with the night. Here, as in the wood she stood leaning against a tree, in order to rest herself and be ready with the first streak of dawn to pursue her journey, and as a beam of moonlight fell through an opening in

the branches overhead full upon her face and figure, a poor winged creature flew trembling towards her and alighted upon her bosom, followed hard by a ferocious bird of night. Psyche gave an open welcome to the poor fugitive, and safely shielded her against the fierce assaults of her adversary. The fugitive turned out to be a large yellow-and-black-striped moth with a "death's-head" marked upon its back, which, as Psyche regarded it, actually began to open its mouth and speak. "Protectress and saviour of my life," it said, "be it known to thee, I am a spirit of the under-world, to which, at the instance of Venus, thou art now bound. Hardly have I, coming up hither, escaped destruction, and much greater is the danger thou runnest by thy descent; therefore, be counselled by one who knows, and is not likely to mislead thee. Go straight before thee as far as the first cross-road, at which turn thee leftward, and thou soon comest flush with the gate of hell. Here go not in without at least two money pieces and two or three small loaves of bread. Resolutely shut thine ear and heart against appeals to thee for help. Scarcely wilt thou recover thyself alive; certainly not another along with thee. Give the smaller coin thou carriest to the ferryman for thy passage over, and be sure thou reserve the larger for thy fare back. To the watch-dog at Pluto's gate, throw, as thou passest him, one of the loaves provided for him, and keep religiously another to quiet him as thou comest out. Proserpina, the queen, will bid thee welcome, and pray thee to sit at her board and eat, but be-

ware thou eat not of her provision and sit not at her table. The box thou bearest, when she returns it to thee, guard carefully, and let nothing tempt thee to open. On such inexorable rigour of law, and strict observance thereof on thy part, does thy success depend. Observe it therefore, and fare thee well." Saying which, this wise-headed, kind-hearted moth flew away and left her.

Psyche was off and away with the first breath of morning, in the direction indicated by her friend the moth, surprised and grateful to find herself provided with every equipment requisite for her journey. Soon she reached the cross-road referred to, turned leftwards, came upon the gate of the under-world, and entered in. At first, the darkness was horrible as death, but, at length, there came a thick hazy dawning, which, though it never brightened into clearness, served sufficiently to show the way. Before her, as she advanced onwards, there jogged wearily along an old ass-driver and his ass; these she soon overtook, but, just as she was about to pass them, the ass tripped, and the ground was strewn in all directions with a multitude of sticks shaken from the bundle bound to her back. The old man in his despair stopped Psyche, and implored her for pity's sake to help him with the fallen wood—"Stooping," he said, "was so painful to his poor crazy back." Psyche instinctively turned as if to help him, but she suddenly recalled the warning, turned her face forwards, and stepped firmly on. By-and-by, Psyche in her progress came upon an old woman who was

sitting moaning by the wayside, and complaining bitterly that the niggardly ferryman must have his paltry penny before he would take her in and row her over. The old woman's distress so moved the heart of Psyche, that she stood for a space debating whether she might not dispense with one of her pieces; and was actually about to part with it, when she again remembered the warning given her, had to harden herself against the appeal addressed to her, and tear herself away. Appeal after appeal she had to listen to, and appeal after appeal she had to suppress; and the lower, in this case, *had*, as oftentimes, to be with sorrow sacrificed to the higher duties of the soul.

And now, at length, Psyche stood on the banks of the flood of the nether-world, and there, fronting her, sat the ferryman, ready waiting in his boat. He was a dark-visaged old man, with a head of rough, unkempt, towy, gray hair, and clad in an old tattered semblance of raiment, his whole aspect in perfect keeping with his strange task. Silently, and almost reverently, Charon, for such was his name, when he saw Psyche approaching, drew to, took her in, and conveyed her over. During the passage, she was fated to listen to one more heart-rending appeal for help, which she could not and dared not respond to—that of an old man who seized hold of the boat, and pled that, as his strength was exhausted, he must, without immediate help, be swept away and swallowed up. The passage finished, Psyche, before she left the boat, put the silver coin between her teeth, leant forward, and so

offered it, while Charon received it from her in the same attitude and way as she gave it to him. She now stepped out of the boat and moved on—still, as from the first, tempted by touching appeals to her essentially human and humane heart for help. A colony of women laboured, as she passed, with some fabric they had no heart to finish; and would have stayed and compelled her to slave along with them, had she not threatened to complain to their lady-mistress, the Queen.

Rid of them, Psyche proceeded without farther distraction, and soon, in the distance, descried the palace of the under-world—a huge pile, built of marble, black as jet. Pluto, the king, happened to be passing at that very moment, and she saw him in all his sable state. He rode, seated gravely in an ebon chariot, his gloomy countenance shaded with the thick-set hair of the head and beard. A crown of ebony, encircled with a wreath of narcissus flowers, rested on his head, while, in one hand, he held a two-pronged sceptre, and, in the other, the golden reins with which he managed his four coal-black steeds. At the porch of the building lay couching the huge dog Cerberus, with his snaky hair, three hideous heads, and hoarse greedy jaws. As soon as the monster saw Psyche approaching, he sprung to his feet in so fierce a rage that echo rang again with the rattle of the hundred chains which held him; and the sound of the bellowing he broke into was such that the whole nether-world appeared to quake under it from end to end,—his eyes the while shooting through the gloom a mere glare of

fire. Psyche stood and hesitated for a time to pass him, but she felt she *must*, or return with her mission unfulfilled. She mustered courage, therefore, drew forth the loaf she had brought for him, and threw it towards him, when, as he greedily devoured it, she shot past him and was through the door.

The inside of the palace Psyche found to match exactly with the aspect of the exterior: the walls, furniture, hangings, all were as black as ebony, and inlaid, or inwrought, with gold. The queen sat, as Psyche entered, in the centre of it, seated on her ebon throne, and invested with the insignia belonging to her rank and dignity. In her right hand she held a pomegranate, and in her left, a branch all budding with narcissus flowers. Psyche, when she saw her, advanced reverently towards her, and threw herself all prostrate at her feet. "What brings thee hither, maiden?" said the queen; "rise and speak." "Our sovereign lady, Venus, prays thee, dread Empress Queen, to grant to me, her messenger, the means she needs, and thou alone possessest, for restoring her care-wasted beauty. Here, in this box, am I to convey it to her." The queen received the box, silently beckoned her to a seat, and left her to fetch the miraculous ointment. Mindful, however, of the warning of the death's-moth, Psyche avoided the seat the queen pointed her to, and, in her weariness, sat down upon the bare ground. Food too, though brought to her, she was careful not to eat, but contented herself with a few crumbs from her own store, reserving always enough to pacify the hungry monster at the gate.

It was not long before the queen returned, bringing with her the golden box, and in it, presumptively, the magic ointment. This she immediately put into the hands of Psyche, and, after wishing her good speed, bade her carry it with care to her mistress Venus. Psyche received it with all reverence, thrust it carefully into her bosom, and then retired bowing to the very ground. Cerberus, as she approached him again, seemed to her still more appalling than when she entered; and for a time she stood before him in terror of her very life; but at length, by a desperate effort, she came up closer, threw him his loaf, and so stopped his bellowing, and darted past. Charon, too, was this time in a sullen humour, and less willing to convey her back than he had been to bring her over, but the golden piece she presented between her teeth was tempting, and at sight of it he, without delay, unmoored his skiff, grasped his paddle oar, and was quickly across. He secured his fare before he landed her, and she, having given it to him, leapt out and left him, as we may well fancy, light of heart. The passage up, with all its terrors, Psyche soon traversed unscathed, but when she reached the forest where she spent the night previous to her descent to Hades, all her strength and spirit seemed to leave her, and she sank upon the ground exhausted, as if to sleep. Hardly, however, had she thus lain down to rest, when her incipient slumber was disturbed and arrested by the fluttering of some creature near her, which at first she scarcely heeded, but at last, clutching at it, found to be an enormous bat. The bat, though

driven off, nothing daunted, returned closer, hovered over her, and finally, by whispers signified that he was the bearer of a message to her from the gods. Psyche listened all attention, and the bat addressed her thus: "I am come after thee express from the nether-world, and am a servant of its queen. I know the precious salve thou bearest, and have hastened after thee to give thee counsel, which, if thou follow, thou wilt not regret. Open the box thou carriest, moisten thy finger, and rub therewith thy face; so shalt thou recover all thy beauty, and the joy of thy husband at thy return and thy own happiness will be complete." So saying, the bat at length took wing and left her.

"Well," thought Psyche to herself, "there is reason here; that which is to improve the beauty of Venus will certainly not disfigure mine:" and forgetful this time of the warning of the moth, she opened the box. Hereupon, immediately there issued out of it a dense vapour, which ascended hovering over her, and when she looked into the box itself behold it was entirely empty—all it held within it had gone up in smoke. Psyche's consternation at this discovery may be more readily conceived than depicted. This one slip at the very last, she of a sudden feared, would cancel and abolish all her sore won victories; and who could assure her, that out of any new trial heaven might in judgment see good to lay upon her, she would ever again emerge with such triumphant success?

Meanwhile the vapour that had just issued from the box, strange to say, gradually condensed again,



and by-and-by assumed the form of a monstrous vampire, which forthwith began determinedly to assail and overpower poor Psyche. Psyche, at first, thought to ward it off and drive it from her, but the pertinacious creature, by the cold, death-breathing flapping of his horrid wings alone, ere long, quite overcame her. By degrees consciousness itself left her, and she lay extended on the ground as if her very life had fled. Now the vampire alighted upon her person, and commenced actually to suck and draw her life's blood. The injury thus inflicted on her body soon affected her soul, and there, as she lay dreaming, she fancied herself given over again into the hands of her tormentor, wrestling with new horrors, yielding to them, and appointed to still more.

In the midst of all this internal anguish, her ear was opened, and she heard beside her the chiding tones of a voice she thought she knew. It seemed like that of one come to deliver her, and she now breathed with greater lightness and peace. At last the voice spoke, calling to her, "Awake, Psyche, awake to a happier present." Upon this she at once recovered her full consciousness, for she now knew the voice that spoke to her; and, opening her eyes, she saw before her the beautiful form of her husband, as he appeared on the night when she for the first time beheld him and then lost him.

Psyche's soul, at his sudden reappearance to her now, was for a time in ecstasy with the most conflicting feelings; but soon these all subsided into a rapt and speechless emotion of wonder and sur-

prise. There he stood before her, holding by the wings the vampire that had been sucking at her life, and which, ever and anon, as he held it, shrieked out a cry of pain. "Compose thyself, beloved," he said, addressing her; "and give me the box this monster rose from." This she at once gave to him; and he, crushing the vampire into it, closed the lid, and continued, "Lucky was it I arrived at this very moment. This vampire is an evil spirit from the pit, imprisoned here by compact between my mother and the nether-queen, his mistress, to punish thee, should any vanity or curiosity, still lurking in thee, tempt thee to transgress the barriers within which thy life is limited. Well I know thou wouldst not of thyself have yielded to this temptation, hadst thou not been seduced by the wicked brother of the monster imprisoned in the box. Thy fall, by this means, my mother never contemplated, and now of this thou art in her eyes free of blame. I am healed by means of the cures procured through thy omnipatient perseverance, and nothing now any more obstructs thy happy future. Come, hie we homeward with all speed." With this, Cupid threw his arms round her, seized her up, and flew away.

Psyche sank at once into a soft, dreamless slumber, and only awoke, when he alighted, to find herself back again in what seemed a hall of Cupid's palace, surrounded by all the great upper gods and goddesses, met in shining company to hail and honour her as Cupid's wife. Hardly had she recovered from the surprise so natural in this strange

environment, when the mother of her husband stepped forward, approached her, and clasped her to her heart with motherly affection. "Forgive me, my daughter," she said, "for all the trials and sorrows I have caused thee, and rest well assured that there was not one of them I would not gladly have spared thee if I could. My son, according to an Order, of which I and all of us are only ministers, must on no account be wed to any one not an approved daughter and sister of the upper gods. It was necessary, therefore, I should prove thee, to see if thou wert worthy to rank among them; if, for this end, there dwelt within thee any true emanation from their undying essence. Nobly hast thou stood the test and proved thy kinship; and though I know thou wert in no case unguided and unaided by helping, co-operative spirits near thee as thy servants, yet wast thou wholly worthy of all the services they so freely rendered thee. All hail, my daughter, and worthy sister of the spirits that served thee!"

This spoken, Psyche was next approached, and saluted by no less a deity than the dread, all-ruling Jove himself, who, as the sovereign disposer of the fates of mortals, thus addressed her:—"Here, in thy palace, live to old age, in world-honour, beside thy husband, and rule with him as his queen over the kingdom of thy father. For so long a time shall thy husband live and reign here, along with thee, in human form; and when thy life is ended, it is permitted thee to enter with him into the high family of the Immortal Gods." And hereupon, by way

of pledge to her of the promise he had given, he called to him Ganymedê, the lovely youth, his cup-bearer, and bade him bring for Psyche a goblet of the nectar of which only Immortals drink, and a draught of which is ever the assurance of an Immortal's life. Psyche having received the cup, drained it, and already believed she felt an inspiration of its high, promised effects. All the gods and goddesses next drew near in order, to welcome her as one all-worthy to rank among them; and chief of those who did so were the Lady Juno and Ceres, the Mother of the Earth. The whole assemblage was pervaded by a spirit of repose and clearness, and all felt proud to relate the tale of Psyche's triumphs, and how, by the present help of Love, her husband, she had once for all vanquished it over greedy Acheron itself.

At length the assembly dispersed, and Psyche and her husband were left alone; when, lo! Cupid was all of a sudden transformed before her eyes into a noble-looking youth of surpassing beauty, upon which he took her by the hand, led her to the window, and invited her to say what she saw. "Ah!" she exclaimed in a burst of rapture, "it is the very city and palace of my father and mother! Are they still alive?" "This very day, long ere sunset, thou shalt see," he answered; and then taking her again by the hand, he led her forth to show her the region round, when, behold, all was changed; the barriers had melted; the *enchanted* Dragonstone was gone for ever, and *on its site* rose the palace, now a *real* one, they twain should hence-

forth occupy together as man and wife, and king and queen. Before the palace, there stood all ready for them a chariot to which were yoked eight snow-white horses, and, beside it, a rich attendance to wait upon and escort them. Here they at once stepped into it, after which they drove off, and in a short time alighted at the gateway of the palace of the old king and queen. The old king saw the flocking and crowding of the people to the gate, and inquired the reason. "What our Lord, the King, would, before all things, rejoice to see in this world!" was the answer of the courtiers who had unceremoniously rushed at the moment into the royal presence. "Can it be Psyche?" exclaimed king and queen together. "It is your daughter Psyche," answered, on the instant, a well-known voice; and immediately, she who was thought lost for ever, rushed rapturously into her parents' arms. "And now," said Psyche, after she and they had in some measure recovered their composure, "you must see the monster, my husband, to whom the old diviner had me doomed:" when there stepped into their presence, with most reverent greeting, the handsomest of men with the royalest bearing, and his appearance gladdened, nay, charmed, the hearts of the old pair.

The joyful tidings of Psyche's return spread through the city with electric speed; and straightway, from all corners, the people flocked to the palace to see her; and a loud-sounding peal of welcome rung itself forth from all hearts, when she and her husband presented themselves on a balcony

of the palace to the assembled multitudes below. The old king and queen, when all was over, accompanied them back to their palace on the site of the Dragonstone ; and from that day onwards they lived together in daily intercourse with their aged parents, who, in their joy, became young again, and lived together to a great old age. And when at length their days were full, and they descended to the grave "like a shock of corn fully ripe," Psyche and her husband succeeded to the kingdom, and the people's hearts were made glad under their serene and blissful government. At last they, too, left the earth, and vanished from it into the Emyrean, where they live and reign henceforward over this Earth of theirs among the Immortal Gods for ever.





#### IV.

### Cupid and the Graces.

**C**UPID, called also Amor by the Latins, and, still better, Eros by the Greeks, was the first begotten, and yet the youngest, of all the gods,—the first, and, in a sense, the last. He was the first hatched from the world-egg, which is sometimes, therefore, called the egg of Eros, when as yet the only separate existences that had sprung from Chaos were, Gaia, or the passive material, and Tartaros, or the active immaterial, or spiritual, elements of being. No further progress could the work of creation make till Eros arose out of it to brood over it. There was nothing in it, above it, or under it, till then; only the possibilities of things were, not the things themselves; the very gods and demons only possibilities—that is, creatures that might exist, but as yet did not. The friendly and the hostile elements of nature, the war of which since constitutes the history of the universe, lay all in silent and most peaceful neighbourhood within the womb of Chaos then, “not a mouse stirring,” not a mouse to stir. All, indeed, waited to be born, each in its order and time, but would have waited

for ever, if the egg of Eros had proved addle, and no Eros appeared. The individual loves and hatreds, which sum up existence and life, are the brood of Eros; for hatred is only love in *some* form, crossed and thwarted, and always in nature so much hostility, so much affection of some kind is there. Nothing of it all could come into being till Eros managed to do so; and the spirit of Eros emerged triumphant, the spirit of the upper gods.

It was, in the Greek cosmogonies, the first day's work of creation, this hatching of the Eros-egg, as the creation of light was in the Mosaic. "Let *love* be," was the first articulately spoken command of the hitherto dumb and helpless, but heaving, Chaos; "Let *light* be," was the first creative word of the already, and from everlasting, living and loving God. And both were obeyed; Chaos, as the Greeks thought, calling for "Love" to lead, and God for "Light." And both are of the beginnings, and a pair decreed from the first in holy wedlock to rule the world. Nay, finds Max Müller, Eros is just Eōs (the Greek for the "dawn") in the masculine gender,—a dawning sun flooding and pervading the world with an ethereal, true heaven's light. But he makes "light" only the image of which "love" is the original. The ancient nations, he thinks, called Love Erōs, because the rise of love in the soul seemed to them to resemble nothing so much as a dawning light, revealing to it for the first time the true splendours and terrors of the world. There is ever a tendency in man to think that to have been first in existence, which he finds to have



been first in his experience. He himself loves before he sees; his heart is open, before his eyes; love must irradiate his world for him before he well knows he is in it, what it is made of, and what to make of it. And so, he thinks, love must have preceded light in nature as it ever does in him, and that as the world first properly comes into existence *for him* under the power of love, love itself must have been the beginning of all things, and the first-begotten of the immortals.

Eros is last-begotten, as well as first-begotten, among the gods, we said. And so he is represented as first brought into being, as a god, by Aphrodite, or Venus, the goddess of beauty, and is, so the myth says, introduced among the Olympian deities for the first time along with her. She was the perfected image, in human form, of that ideal which he had from the beginning been struggling to express; his last and most finished workmanship; the mother-idea of his own being, so to speak, at length realized; and, as such, raised straightway to heaven,—she leading and he following, and both appearing henceforth among the gods, she as the mother, and he as the son. And so Eros, like every other personage who rises to any honour in heaven or on earth, had to work his way upwards by slow degrees, himself winning, with all the gods and all the demon-powers, too, helping him, by long and hard labour, every step of the way up to the high places of the universe. On his finished work alone he first rose to rank and honour among the acknowledged rulers above. He begins to be

worshipped with the production of the most perfect human beauty, and the apotheosis of it is the apotheosis of him. He is exalted by his own workmanship, and through his workmanship he will henceforth rule.

Venus, his own creation, becomes from this date his mother and mistress, whom he is content ever after to serve and please. It is not, however, so well with Eros now, god though he is thereby acknowledged to be. The exclusive worship paid to this one perfection of his art—for beauty is ever love's work and revelation—and the honour paid to himself in consequence, to all appearance, turn his head, and spoil him. Persuaded by the voice of the public opinion, of high and low alike, to believe that the force of genius could no further go, he takes to admiring as perfect this one work of his hands, and is content that all the world should wonder and admire too. The worship of his beautiful woman is sure in this way to transform itself into the adulation of mere beauty—that is, of beauty apart from the soul, of which it is the effulgence; and to become an idolatry enkindling desire instead of a reverence awakening devotion. He can do no better he thinks, and he will try no other, and so he follows worshipping his creature as his mother, and forsakes his wife, Psyche, or the Soul. He deceives himself, and dreams to find happiness and honour by works, and one work especially, instead of by working, and still working, with his mate. He and she—Love and the Soul—working together, might go on producing Venuses

without end, each different, and all beautiful; but, divorced and separated, they may continue producing, indeed, yet no longer any being, or even thing, truly god-like.

The last of the gods with a witness! for, with a Venus, sovereign in heaven, and an Eros, following in her train to do her bidding, the end is come. Venus is beautiful no doubt, but the artist that created her is more beautiful still; and when the artist forgets himself in admiration of his work, there is a fatal inversion and subversion of all *art* whatsoever. Beauty is but the image of love—the outside image; and the worship of beauty with love for minister instead of maker is an idolatry sure to become an abomination; the more beautiful, the more abominable, because the more deceptive. Venus—child of Eros and the Soul, transmuted into the mother, into a goddess who grants, in obedience to desire, possession of a certain form of external fading beauty as the chief good—is a false and illusory goddess; and for Love to worship what he has himself made, except as an index and light to himself, is in reality Love's apostasy, not his apotheosis. By this one act he has forfeited his godhood entirely; and, curiously, of this there appears to have been a latent sense in his very worshippers. Sunk not from godhood only, but from manhood even, he is treated henceforth as a beautiful indeed and beaming, but a wilful, freakish, mischief-meaning, mischief-making little boy, befooling, misleading, and tormenting without mercy gods and men alike. His form and

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*See: Venus*

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appearance are familiar to every one, with his full, round, ruddy face, smiling blue eyes, light transparent wings, and quiver of gold full of arrows,—some of them golden to excite, and others leaden and blunt, to extinguish the passion; both laden with torments and miseries enough, from which, it is said, few escape unscathed. Like the goddess of Justice, he figures often with a bandage round his eyes, but for a different reason. Hers are bandaged to represent her impartiality; his, to signify that his elections and rejections were, for most part, as irrational as if made altogether without eyes.

Besides attending Venus as her son, he is himself at times attended by Pothos (Desire); Himeros (Longing); Bacchus (the exhilaration wine inspires); Tyche (Fortune, also blind), or the Muses, the goddesses of the softly rhythmic arts. But of all Cupid's companions the best are the Graces. The Muses are good, but the Graces are better. The Muses are the daughters of Zeus (the World Ruler) and Mnemosynê (Memory), and their function is to inspire into the poet-soul an ability to render rhythmically, or musically, what has been seen or felt in experience; as, for instance, by the arts of History, Poetry, Music itself, Painting, &c. But the Graces are the living inspirers of that of which the Muses are only the rhythmic revealers—the possessors of what the Muses are only the portrayers. These only celebrate what the Graces have accomplished, and are content to sing what the Graces have done. They are the goddesses



of the art of which the Graces supply the living subject and model.

The Graces, or Charites as the Greeks call them, allied as Max Müller tells us to the Haritas, or Horses of the Sun, *i.e.*, his emanations, are sometimes reckoned two in number, and sometimes three; but originally they appear to have been regarded as being, what at bottom they are, *one*. At last they were spoken of as *three*, and called Aglaia, Euphrosynê, and Thalia. Thalia was the blooming one, or life in full bloom; Euphrosynê, the cheerful one, or life in the exuberance of joy and sympathy; and Aglaia, the shining one, or life in its effulgence of sunny splendour and glory. But these three are one, involved each in the other, and made perfect in one. There is not Thalia by herself, or Aglaia; but where one truly *is*, there, in the same being also, the other two are. They are three sisters as such always inseparable, and in their inseparability alone are Graces. Their secret is not learned from one, but from all the three; and they give grace only with fulness, buoyancy, and radiancy of soul, or life, united all in one. They are in essence the soul in its fulness of life and sympathy, pouring itself forth through every obstruction, before which the most solid becomes fluid, transparent, and radiant of *itself*. Put a young healthy soul full of life under their teaching, and the soul's body and workmanship will become transparent of the soul's self.

The Graces themselves were the inspirers of the most perfect transparency of soul, and their

work was as spiritually radiant of it and charming as themselves. Aglaia, or Aphrodite, who was originally one of them, wore a girdle, called the Cestus, which was of the Graces' workmanship, and radiant with the divine thought, feeling, and beauty of the lovely makers. And so directly did it hold of, and reveal the soul of beauty, that whoever possessed it could, by means of it, at once captivate and control the most unwilling heart. Its power lay in its being completely translucent of that which is, in truth, the only charmer, the pure soul, or life.

This soul-transparency, which characterizes the life and workmanship of the Graces, was not a merely physical, but a spiritual effect—an effect, that is, not of mere nature, but of life, loyal to law, and triumphant over all obstruction to its free outpouring and ongoing. And hence Homer makes Grace, Charis, or Aphrodite so viewed, the wife of Vulcan ; thus implying, that before the life or soul could become self-transparent, or Charis, she must be wedded to labour in the element of fire, too, of which Vulcan was the god. Not the wife she of any mere water-god, still less of a mud-god, the former of whom forms crystals by letting them form themselves, and the latter by allowing the atoms to adjust themselves by law of chance, but of the fire-element itself, or labour slowly and painfully transfusing, as in fire-heat, itself into its work. Such were the Graces, the full soul through the glow and fire of labour emerging in an all-victorious and all-joyous self-transparency ; and such were the god-

desses best qualified to *instruct* Cupid and redeem him from his fallen state. And these happily are the teachers whom Cupid would most willingly please and thus be loyal to; he would do anything to regain the approbation of the transparent human soul, his first and only true mate and partner. Here one, and there another, taught by the Graces, or the Muses, their rhythmic revealers, to trust in and labour from the resources of the soul, were, at any time, enough to recall Love to his true function in the world again as the regenerator and restorer of social life, the reconciler and uniter of living men.





V.

### Midas.

**T**HERE was once a king in Phrygia whose name was Midas. Like many a better man, who unlike him has proved himself a king in nature, though no king in name, he was the son of a poor peasant, who saw himself in one day suddenly raised to the throne by a mere freak of fortune. The Phrygians, his countrymen, so the story goes, had, in a period of great public disorder and perplexity, sent an embassy to a neighbouring oracle to seek counsel of the gods; and the ambassadors had just returned and announced it to be the will of heaven that, to escape the danger otherwise inevitable, they must await in the market-place and choose for ruler the first man that should enter it thereafter riding in a car; when, it so happened, the first to do so were the father and mother of Midas, who accordingly were on the very spot hailed and installed as king and queen.

It was bad enough for Midas to be in all senses low born; it was worse for him to rise by so sudden a bound from the lowest degree to the very highest; and it was absolutely ruinous to him to know and

remember that he had risen thus. It confirmed him in the belief, altogether fatal to him as a man, still more as a king, and to which, by his low physique, he was already too prone, that good, having come upon him, is a something into which a man can be borne, instead of, what it always is, a something born of the man, which he himself carries, and which does not carry him. All the good he knew of had come upon him, and not out of him ; and he lived all his days under the fatal delusion, that he could be led, or charmed, into his fortune ; whereas his fortune could only be led by him ; and he was content to remain the slave of what he should have been the master. Life, which is ever an active well-doing, figured in his low, ignoble thinking as a passive well-being. To be borne seemed to him ever more kingly than to bear ; and a ship carried with the breeze was, in his eyes, a lordlier spectacle than when it stood against the breeze, victoriously braving it. Hence his passion for riches as the highest good ; since in them he recognised a talisman able to bear him into all happiness, or all happiness to him. Hence, too, his admiration of sots over sages, and his preference of the wild, wanton effusions of Pan to the regulated and celestial strains of Apollo.

One day, as Midas sat affecting to play the king in the midst of his courtiers, a singular-looking stranger, mounted unsteadily on an ass, was led, with brawling noise, by three peasants into the palace-yard. He was a corpulent old man, with a

head almost bald, a round nose turned upwards, a roguish expression of mouth, and eyes that blinked continually in the strong sun-light. The peasants had found him sprawling on the ground, with his ass standing near him, and ever and anon stammering out, "My king ! where is my king ? Can no one lead me to the king ?" The three, having crowned him with garlands, had helped him on his beast again, and brought him to Midas ; one being required to guide the animal, and the other two to steady him on its back. The man, being unable to walk, could not be led into the king's presence ; and so Majesty had better trouble himself to step down and see him ; which Majesty, being idle, and therefore curious, was ready to do, and did. Here, as he descended, he found a crowd collected round him, who were every now and then exploding into roars of laughter over what seemed his odd harangues, but who, when they saw the king approaching, at once suppressed their merriment and stepped respectfully aside. The king thereupon addressed the peasants, and inquired what they wanted, and who this merry stranger was they had brought. The peasants related the reason of their visit, as we have given it ; and he, turning to the man himself, with a pompous air, inquired what was the business on which he had come to treat with King Midas. "Midas !" hickuped he. "Midas ! Nothing I know of—never heard of him. These boobies of yours there pulled, and pushed, and pommelled my ass, in spite of himself, hither, and insisted I must mean you, when, as my very ass knew, I meant

quite another. He, my master, has another set of people about him, I can tell you ; and he's not the fool you are to suffer himself to be cooped up in a dull, stupid, stony prison of a place like this. The free air and the sunny heights are his ; and the people about him have none of the slow and stolid manners of the people about you, but are as free and easy as all pure children of nature ought to be."

It vexed the king not a little to be obliged to listen to this abusive tirade, the more that it was spoken in the hearing of his own people, in whose eyes he so naturally wished to be regarded as the greatest king alive ; but there was a certain charm in the manner of the man which he could not resist, and his curiosity, in spite of all, was greater, if anything, than before. It took no pressing to make so boastful and garrulous a man confess all about both himself and the great king he prided in. "Do you not know Silenus?" was his quizzing reply to the interrogation of Midas. "I am Silenus, whom all the world knows ; and the master I so proudly follow everywhere, is my Lord Bacchus, whom the world worships as my pupil, and the actual, living god of the soul-inspiring wine. He learned to please me as my pupil ; and now he pleases me, I hold and follow him as my king. While I live, I will own no other sovereign-master ; and, for the joy he brings me, I will accompany him to the world's end."

Midas, who had heard of Bacchus, his vines, vineyards, and world-renown, was at once seized

with awe to find himself in the presence of his distinguished subject, and immediately he proceeded to treat him as a guest who would do him honour and procure him favour with his lord. A festival, in celebration of his arrival and to his special honour, was instantly proclaimed over the length and breadth of the kingdom; and for ten days and as many nights, there was, by the royal bounty, an incessant revelry of feasting among the people, even to the very lowest and poorest ranks. The feasting over, Silenus could be detained no longer, but was impatient to be led, the very morning after, back to the court of his pupil and king. Midas himself accompanied him; and before mid-day, the two, journeying westward, had passed into Lydia, and were within hearing of the shouting of the children of the vine. As they advanced farther, the sounds waxed clearer; and the whole was soon discovered to be a mixture of exulting human voices, wild excitement of tambourine-beating, and flute-music, now shrill, now soft and drowsy; which Silenus and his ass no sooner heard than they responded to—he, with the familiar shout of a bacchanalian, and his brute, with his equally celebrated, loud, long, discordant bray. Soon the party arrived at the spot from which the shouting proceeded; and Midas, at the very first view of the scene before him, stood still, gazing in with the most boorish look of awe and wonder, as of one who, by a stroke of magic, had been all at once transported into another world.

It was a sunny region, lying far and wide before



him, of rich and varied foliage, of luxuriant, temptingly-laden vines, and gay with a world of the most softly-happy or triumphantly-joyful human hearts he had ever seen. Straight before him, but within the enchanted circle, there stood a chariot, all decorated with vine branches, and loaded with clusters of grapes, to which there were two tigers yoked in front. In the chariot there stood, leaning, a figure of manly proportions, but feminine roundness of form and softness of expression—his whole air as of a man languidly and dreamily occupied—and his head decorated with a wreath of vine and ivy leaves, and a golden fillet studded all round with emerald stones. But that which in his aspect most affected the heart of Midas, and moved it to its depths, was a pair of short horns of gold which projected above the fillet, and gleamed invitingly through the wreath and hair. The people round him were, for most part, in the earlier stages of inebriation, and danced grotesquely; some were piping away on shrill-sounding Phrygian flutes, some shaking high and beating wildly the noisy tambourine; and a few, here and there, reeled and rioted more like madmen than men.

Midas stood for a space stock-still, looking on, and lost in gaping wonder, when he was aroused from his reverie by Silenus, who handed him the reins of his ass, and bade him, as his guide, lead him back to his lost master. This service, as requested, Midas at once undertook; but, after advancing a few paces, he halted and drew back at the sight he now first caught of the two tigers. How-

ever, he regained his confidence in a measure, and proceeded, when Bacchus, who noticed his alarm, assured him the animals were tame.

Bacchus spoke him welcome, and thanked him for having restored to him his lost faithful patron and steady follower, for which, he added, he would like to reward him on the spot. Let him wish *one* wish, and it would at once be granted him. Only *one*, he was to remember; but that one would without fail be gratified. Bacchus, who well knew the weakness of Midas, broadly cautioned him against shaping his choice by *it*, and expressly exhorted him to choose with wisdom. It was a testing moment for poor Midas, and the question of questions for the man himself; as for all men, indeed, since the beginning of the world. It was a Sphinx-question; rewarded with mother-embraces, if answered rightly, or with tiger-embraces, if answered wrong. In the case of Midas, it was now to be seen how he would answer this question; and Midas, alas! deliberately decided wrong, foolishly thinking, that if he got what he wished, it mattered nothing to determine first whether what he wished was what he wanted. He had all his life had one ruling passion, and that, in spite of cautions from high quarters, was the passion he, with the opportunity given, expressly sought to have fully gratified now. Wealth, or rather gold; he thought, if he had only an exhaustless store of gold, he would be happy; and gold, accordingly, he asked. And that he might be always sure of having it when he wanted it, he prayed the gods to grant him the power of

transmuting into it everything he touched. To this wish, when he came to prefer it, Bacchus only answered, in at first an indignant, and then a pitying tone; "Well, then, be it so, as thou hast desired it; and hie thee home again to find thyself a convicted fool. Hadst thou only known the choice of the upper powers for thee, and to sacrifice thy choice to theirs, it had been well. Be the curse thou hast wished for thyself thy cure some day."

Upon which Midas departed, dead, as usual with such as he, to all sense of the curse spoken over him, and only eager to reach a wood in front of him, where, in secret, to make proof of this new-gotten power. Hardly, therefore, had he turned in, and was fairly hidden by its thick foliage, when, raising his hand, he seized a branch, and, as he broke it off, lo! to his ravished vision branches and leaves together became on the instant all of gold. The same experiment he tried, now on this object, now on that, all the way of his journey homeward; and in every case with like success, to the joy of his very heart. At length, when he arrived at the door of his palace, to which notwithstanding he made all speed, he tried one last experiment, just before entering, on the pillars and door-posts, when, behold, these also began to glow and gleam in the evening sunset. His wish had indeed been granted, and his happiness was complete.

Entering now the palace itself, the first thing he called for was water to wash his hands with; and this too, as he touched it, began to glitter, and the

drops, as they passed through his fingers, descended into the vessel, a perfect shower of gold. This result, however, far from disappointing him, but enhanced his foolish joy. Only when the pangs of hunger had time to assert themselves, and he tried to eat, did his eyes begin to open to his folly, and himself obtain a distinct, if but a transient, revelation, that he was a fool. A certain demand was made upon him, which, with all his gold, he could not meet. Rich though he thought himself, he could not pay the first bill which was presented—the just and terrible demand of his own stomach for food. “Great is bankruptcy;” it opens the eyes even of a fool. The food which Midas touched, equally with everything else, became gold—fish and flesh, soup and solid, fruits and bakemeats; and now first had the poor man a glimpse of the terrible truth of the words of Bacchus, that, in his own home, he would find he had chosen for himself a curse.

Alive, at length, to this conviction, that, fool or no fool, he had at least chosen foolishly, and horror-stricken at the immediate prospect of the terrible penalty there was now to pay, he rushed out to a solitary spot behind his palace, threw himself upon the ground, and piteously implored the gods to take back for ever the shining accursed thing. Calling aloud upon Bacchus, he prayed vehemently: “Forgive, thou large-hearted one—oh, forgive, and have pity; for, alas! I have been a fool, a great fool. Bid me do anything; gladly will I do it, to be delivered from this curse.” And soon, for

the gods are pitiful, and hear a man the moment he confesses to them the truth about himself, and, in this way, renders homage to the justice of their ways with him—soon, we say, Midas, to his joy, heard a voice make answer, and a soft voice too. He listened; it announced forgiveness clearly, and prescribed only one simple condition to be observed by him to ensure it. He must repair—for the gods, as we have often seen, are explicit, as well as pitiful and helpful, to the poor in spirit—he must repair straightway to Sardis, the chief city of the region of the Bacchus-worship he had affronted by his choice, and thence trace the river it stands upon upwards to its source, in which it he plunged his head, just where the waters issue bursting from their fountain, the gods would cleanse him of this misery, and allow him for this time, by way of further trial of him, to begin again, as it were, *anew*. In which his Mentor wished him all success and better judgment.

Midas, all hungry and thirsty as he was, immediately started for Sardis nothing doubting; forgetful of all his other miseries, in his single passionate desire to be rid of this. In three days, walking on without resting even with the night, he had accomplished the prescribed journey, and arrived, faint and weary, at the holy well. He spent, as we may be sure, no time deliberating, but instantly plunged under with his head, when, as he withdrew it, lo! to his astonished gaze, not the water, but the sand was gold. The virtue had, as it seemed, gone from him to the river; and, from that day to

this, tradition alleges, the river Pactólus carries down golden sand.

At sight of this, the heart of Midas overflowed with rapture ; and, for a time, he forgot his hunger in his excess of joy. At length, however, the claims of nature became imperative, and he turned away to refresh himself with food and slumber. These demands satisfied, he returned neither to the river nor to his palace, but wandered about for days, now in the open country around, now in the forest depths, and again, on the airy heights of the mountains.

One day, as in his wanderings, after climbing the sides of Mount Tmolus, he sat looking foolishly seaward along the ridge, with the valley of Sardis at his feet on the right, and the valley of Hypæpa on the left, his ear was startled with a sound beside him, as of one playing a pipe. Looking round, he saw, to his surprise, a strange being, half-man, half-goat, emerging from a side valley of the mountain, attended by a company of gay-hearted, bright-eyed maidens, who made merry over him, and never lay off him with their teasing sallies. The upper half of his body was as of a man, and the under, as of a goat ; but there were goatish features visible throughout, as in the short horns and beard, and the general hairy aspect. He stepped along on his goat's feet with all gravity, and was nowise disconcerted by the teasing with which his companions persecuted him. He carried a staff under his left arm, and kept blowing, as he went, with might and main upon a pipe composed of reeds of different lengths, united together side by side with wax.

He came up near to where Midas, who now slipped aside, had been sitting, stood of a sudden stock still, and began with conscious study and effort to pipe his very best, while his attendant damsels plied him with their banter more provokingly than ever. They ran up to him, now one, now another, now all, and kept calling to him: "Pan, dear Pan, catch me if you can!" Pan piped away, and, for a time, he seemed to pay no heed to their interruptions. By-and-by, however, pleased with his piping, and confident of the issue, he would, in exulting mood, clutch first at one and then another; until, at length, his satisfaction with himself having reached its climax, he seized one boldly and waltzed away with her, shouting aloud ever and anon, "Hurra! Pan for ever! Apollo, the master, can do nothing to that!" It was a sight to ravish the souls of the damsels; and their laughter, "from the heart outwards, and as if from head to heel, was loud, long, and uncontrollable." It died away, however, and they vanished along with it, when they heard approaching them a voice of serious dignity, as from one ascending by the opposite side of the hill. It was the voice of Apollo, who, having heard the boast of Pan, made, too, in the hearing of King Midas, was come to challenge him to a musical contest on the spot. This challenge Pan, sure of victory, at once accepted; and both, at Pan's suggestion, agreed to refer the dispute between them to Tmolus, Genius of the mountain, as umpire, and to abide by the decision he might pronounce.

Apollo looked a youth of most radiant beauty, earnest mien, and majestic bearing, his golden locks encircled with a wreath of simple laurel. He wore a rich purple mantle, which, depending from his shoulders, swept the ground; and, as he stood, he supported, with his left hand, a gorgeously jewelled lyre of Indian ivory; and held, in his right, the plectrum, with which to strike it as he played. Tmolus, the judge, appeared the moment they called him; and, as he passed King Midas, seemed a stately personage of venerable and earnest aspect, with a wreath of oak-leaves and acorns round his temples. Tmolus, who knew well for what he had been summoned, accepted at once the post appointed him, and straightway ordered them to begin—Pan to play first.

Pan, thereupon, set at once to work, seating himself on a projecting rock with his goat's-legs folded under him, and applying his pipe to his mouth with the self-satisfied air of one who felt sure of his superiority. Apollo and Tmolus stood by as he played, both inwardly writhing under the infliction;—Pan, the while, piping with greater and greater vehemence, and ravished more than ever with his wild and wayward notes. At length, when he ceased, which he did from sheer exhaustion of blowing, both breathed more lightly; and Apollo was heard audibly to thank the gods. It was now Apollo's turn to perform; and so, stepping forward, he began to strike the chords with the fury of a man boiling with anger, and raging to give it vent. Midas thought, as he listened, he was only tuning



his instrument and preparing to play. And now, at length, the god began a strain of the most exquisite, finished, and exalted melody, and, raising his voice, sung a hymn accompanying, in words breathing full of the spirit of the wisdom that ruled the world; of which, however, all poor Midas could comprehend was, that it had something to do with the praise of an art loudly boasted of under the name of poetry.

As soon as Apollo had finished, Pan started to his feet and strutted forward, confidently challenging from Tmolus the verdict in his favour. Tmolus, all unhesitating, stepped forward a pace, and, with a lofty scorn in his eye, only said; "Thou entire booby, thy screaming pipings have only lacerated my ears; while the divine music of thy rival has raised and ravished my very soul." Saying which, he, on the instant, turned away and vanished down the slopes of the mountain. Here Midas, who had experienced the most heartfelt weariness during the playing of Apollo, could restrain himself no longer; but, starting up from his hiding-place, proceeded to volunteer a judgment the very opposite to that just given by the mountain god. "I, for my part," exclaimed he, "have never listened to a more unrighteous sentence. Thou there, with thy long weary humming on the strings, hadst ten times over almost sung me into slumber; while, as for thy better, plague me, if I did not, every moment, feel the blood thrilling through every limb and muscle of my body, and restlessly pricking me to spring up and dance." At this speech, Pan sprang

a leap high in the air, tumbled a somerset round and round, then descended, clapping his loud applause, and vanished in an ecstasy of jubilation down the mountain. Apollo slipped gently up to Midas, and pulled his ears; remarking, that he had taken the ears for human ones; but it would mercifully prevent mistakes in future if they were lengthened a little, and be better for the man himself to be admonished thereby of a truth so wholesome for him to remember, as well as a warning to him and the like of him to hold modesty among the chief of virtues, and not interfere in things too high for them. With this, Apollo turned away and left him. Midas looked for a time thereafter mere amazement and stupid wonder; but at length, as his power of reflection returned to him, he was heard sapiently soliloquizing thus: "And I was quite right too; for, did not the piper please me; and the insolent with the fiddle, not? What better voucher can a man have for his judgment than his own senses? I was moved by the one, and not at all by the other. I will not be bullied thus out of my better judgment. And yet,—and yet,—it does seem as if my ears were really longer than they were before." And, thereupon, he raised his hands to ascertain; when, to his horror, he found his ears not only long as any ass's, but actually covered with hair as well. At this discovery, Midas was, at first, anew stunned into a state of stupor; by-and-by, when his senses were half restored to him, he went blubbering off into a childish whimper; and, at length, when the full horror of his situation dawned upon him, he

was smitten with a despair too great for tears. It was not the reflection that he *had* the ears of an ass, but the later reflection that he would *be seen* to have them, which first startled him wide awake, and prompted him to consider. It was a great comfort to him, however, to think that the girls had not seen them; and he might yet contrive to keep them hidden, and avert the demon-laughter sure to greet him, if he failed. How to conceal them from the eyes of others, therefore, now became his master anxiety; and the resolution of this problem taxed henceforth all his faculty of thought. His miserable desire for wealth had suddenly collapsed into an equally miserable fear of discovery; and he found it an infinitely more difficult thing to evade the destinies with their just judgments, than to attain to a momentary gratification of his vain cupidities.

One wish, however, he was still tormented with; and this, with the true passion of a fool, he was determined at any risk to gratify. It was the desire to see how, first of all, this new head-appendage looked, and whether the sense of touch would have its testimony confirmed by the faculty of vision. Round and round, therefore, he wandered, or rather rushed, to seek the mirror of some pool, and came, at last, to one all mantling with weeds, where, sure enough, he saw clearly with his eyes what his sense of touch had already proved to him, and also that his ears were in colour, as well as shape and covering, those of an ass. His dismay was now complete; and away he dashed

in his despair to the nearest covert, there to lament and hide himself. Here, however, his good angel did not suffer him to remain long; for hunger, once more, re-asserted its benign authority over him; and, as compelled by it, he must issue forth and front the world, it was necessary he should at once either extemporize a covering, or resolve to appear among his people with his ears unmasked. A covering, accordingly, he attempted; and after various, more or less unsuccessful, devices, all of which were failures because the ears still peered above them, he hit upon the happy thought of cutting off a piece sufficient from his purple mantle, and concealing his shame with it: which done, he stepped forth from his retreat, and turned eastward to the capital of his kingdom.

On the way homeward, now one, now another, of his people met him; and all naturally accosted him, anxiously inquiring whether any, and what strange thing had befallen him. To the most he pretended to have fallen and injured his head among the rocks of the mountains; but his excuse to his own domestics, who came all flocking round him as they heard of his arrival, was, that, having of late been a martyr to the direst headaches, he had taken the advice of an eminent physician at the court of a foreign prince, and learned that the only but all-sufficient remedy against such inflictions was to wear continually, by day as well as night, a cap of the kind, and of a purple fabric. He, thereupon, gave orders to have a number made and ready for his use; and soon his people grew accustomed to their

strange appearance, believing that, for the sake of his health alone, the king, their master, wore them. Nay, some of his courtiers went the length of wearing caps similar in all respects, except in height; for they feared that, by having theirs in every way equal to his, they would offend his majesty, and incur his displeasure.

In this way, Midas managed for a time to keep his secret to himself with little difficulty; but, by-and-by, it seemed he would not long be able to retain it from the knowledge of at least another, and he, unhappily, was the greatest newsmonger in all his kingdom. This was the domestic whose duty it was at stated seasons to wait on Majesty, and amputate the royal hair. Again and again, did this official, as in duty bound, announce himself at the palace gates; and time after time must he retire, for now this reason and now that, with his mission unfulfilled. It was easy to foresee, an importunate like this was not to be put off for ever; and Majesty, accordingly, at length, made up his mind to admit him, and allow him to operate upon his hair. When, therefore, the barber appeared next time to abide the royal pleasure, he was at once shown into the king's private chamber, and there left, in strictest secrecy, with the king alone. It was a moment big with fate to king and barber both, and both, for a moment, which seemed infinite, felt it. To the barber it was clear from the first there lay involved some mighty secret; but, when Midas arose and beckoned him with dumb signs to the inmost corner of the chamber, he felt

something of the awe of a man to whom the gods were about to impart a revelation. Midas seized him by the tunic, brought his ear close to his mouth, and whispered in. "Give ear," he said; "now thou art to know the reason why I have so often refused to see thee, and sent thee home again with thy duty undischarged; only, before I tell thee, thou must swear to me by all the gods to betray to no mortal man the secret which I shall thereafter reveal to thee." The barber, all curiosity to know the promised mystery, was ready to put himself under any oath the king might exact of him; and so, by the oath required, bound himself to keep the secret to himself for ever. The king, thereupon, gradually unmasked himself, and bit by bit exposed to view a sight before which both eye and mouth of the astonished barber opened only wider and wider. Had the eye of man ever seen the like before? Could any mortal man, who saw it, be compelled by the fear of any judgment to hold it secret, or resist the temptation to indulge himself in the delicious luxury of telling it to others?

For a time after the revelation made to him, the joy of the barber amounted to religious ecstasy; and it was, if anything, enhanced by the thought that the mystery he was favoured with was wholly esoteric—a secret, that is, known to not another besides himself. But soon the joy he felt at having it was marred by the thought that he must not tell it; and, at length, such was his passion to publish it, that he became the most miserable man alive.

At first, for fear of letting it out along with other secrets, he for days avoided opening his lips to speak on any matter; and, at last, since this was impracticable for any period, he eschewed all fellowship with others, and finally rushed away in a fit of sheer desperation to the lonely and unfrequented hills. But to such a man, living alone with no one to speak to, was more intolerable than living with others to whom he must not speak; and so, come what would, he determined to return to the city. On his way back, the weight of his secret so oppressed him, that he felt as if, were he to retain it longer, he would almost burst. Any utterance, he believed, would relieve him; and so, before he reached any human dwelling, or met any human being, he turned aside from the highway, entered a meadow, which he crossed, and there discharged himself, to his infinite relief, of his weighty trust. Here, with great deliberation, he dug in the earth a hole of no great depth, lay down all his length in front of it, and, with his hands guarding his mouth, whispered slowly in, "King Midas, be it known to you, has very, very long ass's ears under that cap of his!" Which having done, the barber carefully filled up the hole he had hollowed, and took the road again for the city, light of heart.

And now, in course of time, it happened that, from the spot of ground in which the barber, having deposited his secret, mercifully found relief, there sprang up, waving, a whole forest of reeds, out of which the people, as they passed them, when the

wind searched through them, imagined they heard whisperings as of a human voice. Towards the evening twilight, it was noticed, the sounds grew more distinct; and those who, at that time passing, listened, heard in low, yet clear utterance, the words, "King Midas has very, very long ass's ears under that cap of his!" Now, indeed, the secret, confided so guardedly to the barber, remained a secret no longer; and all, high and low, in public and private, soon became aware of the reason of the singular guise of late adopted and introduced by Midas. All who had, in imitation, assumed it, we may be sure, at once and for ever, thereupon, renounced and forswore it; and, over the length and breadth of the kingdom, men and women of every rank laughed, and anew laughed, over Midas, his long ears, and his towering head-pieces; and this, too, without surmise on the part of the king that his secret had been betrayed, or had got wind in the wide world.

At length, it chanced, however, that, as he returned one day from an exciting hunt, with his suite attending him, he himself passed the spot and heard the whisperings. At first, it seemed to him the sounds must proceed from some knavish fellow lurking among the rushes; and so, he gave orders to have them on the instant cut down to the very roots, himself, the while, ascending an eminence close at hand, to assure himself against the escape of the skulking villain into the adjoining thickets. But, as neither he nor his mowers descried or discovered any one the law could lay hold upon and drag to



justice, nothing remained but to guard carefully against a repetition of the whisperings by continually cropping the rising rushes, and for Midas, meanwhile, with all fortitude to keep his stupid heart dull and dead to all sense of the shame of the discovery. And thus he lived, rising and dressing, eating and drinking, going out and in, and by day, as by night, doing nothing; guarding himself only against the reeds, which, if permitted, were as ready as ever to rise up and reveal anew his shame to the world. But when, by the favour of merciful Heaven, he died and was buried, not only did the ass-ears go to the grave along with him, but the very reeds from that moment forgot all about them; for, though they grew up on the spot the same as formerly, and the wind as erewhile sounded through them, no one, as he passed, ever heard them whisper the name of Midas any more. The good Earth-Mother, *so* kind she to all her children!

“What a truth in these old fables!” Terrible penalty, with the ass-ears *or* without them, inevitable as death, written for ever in heaven, against all who, like Midas, misjudge the inner and the upper melodies, and prefer gold to goodness, desire to duty, falsehood to fact, wild nature to God, and a sensual piping Pan to a high-souled, wise-hearted, and spirit-breathing Apollo. Such is an indication of the deep, world-wide meaning in the myth of Midas.





## VI.

### The Argonauts.

HERCULES AND HYLAS.

**T**HE Argonautic Expedition was a great naval enterprise which, in the earliest antiquity, was undertaken to fetch from far-off Colchis the golden fleece to Greece. This fleece, the story goes, belonged to a ram which the gods had sent to Bœotia to bear away Phrixus and Helle from the cruelty of their step-dame, Ino. The ram appeared to the boy and girl one day as they played together in the field; and, after tempting them farther and farther away from the neighbourhood of their dwelling, let himself be touched and fondled by them, and, finally, suffered, first the one, and then the other, quietly to mount his back. The ram, thereupon, after moving round and round a little, as if for their amusement, began to make straight off with them, first running, and then flying over mountain and valley, forest and stream. Both, as he mounted, felt uneasy, and the girl especially soon grew giddy, and was ready to fall. At length, unable to hold her seat any longer, and exhausted with the effort of clinging to her brother, she let

go, and dropped helplessly into an arm of the ocean, which has ever since borne her name, and is, to this day, called the sea of Helle, or the Hellespont; while the boy, having kept his seat till the ram alighted, was borne to the territories of the Colchians on the eastern shores of the Black Sea. Here, as he landed, he was hospitably entertained by King Æetes, to whom, after sacrificing the body of the ram to Jupiter, he delivered up the fleece, receiving in return the king's daughter to wife, and, therewith, the right to succeed him, as king, in his kingdom.

The fleece the king, when he received it, suspended in a sacred grove near his palace, having dedicated it to Mars, the god of war; and as, by decree of fate, his life itself depended upon his retaining possession of it, he not only guarded it himself as his most precious treasure, but the gods, to secure him in it, planted near it an ever-wakeful, monstrous dragon, at the very sight of which the stoutest quailed.

Such is the history of the fleece, which, at the time referred to, it was the ambition of all Greece to recover; and to secure it was the great purpose of the world-famous Argonautic Expedition, to which our story relates. This expedition derived its name from the ship in which it was undertaken; and the word Argonaut means simply "sailor in the ship Argo." The heroes who went in it were themselves the sailors; and these embraced all of heroic quality, in every department, which Greece at the time contained within it, or was fabled to do.

Each was the first man of his day in his own special form of heroism, and all were men of the toughest fibre, steadiest purpose, and, on the whole, the "most peaceable bass tone of voice." Jason was the commander of the whole enterprise; Tiphys was the helmsman; and Lynceus, the sharpest-sighted man alive, watched the bearings and directed the course of the ship. Peleus, the father of Achilles, and Telamon, the father of Ajax, occupied together the poop of the vessel; while Hercules, the mightiest of them all, held by himself the fore-part, and hung his arms over the prow. Jason had, at starting, dedicated his shield to Neptune, and secured the favour of the deities of the ocean by a sacrifice, with supplication, solemnly offered on the shore.

After various voyaging and adventure, it happened that, coasting one morning along the northern shores of Mysia, the Argonauts turned into the bay of Chios to re-victual, if possible, their vessel, and rest and refresh themselves for a day and night on land. The inhabitants, who came down to the beach to meet them, welcomed them, one and all, with respectful greeting, and prepared to treat them with the hospitality and honour due to distinguished strangers. They kindled on the spot a fire to warm them, and invited them to partake of the best and richest their store supplied. The noblest vied with the humblest in doing them honour and providing for their wants; and these all, as the heroes feasted, only served and waited. This attention the heroes royally and loyally ac-

knowledged ; and they ate, and drank, and made merry till the sun went down.

Only Hercules could not be prevailed upon to continue at the board and tarry over the wine-cup. With him, duty was ever greater than delectation, and ministering than being ministered unto. The end of man, he felt, was at no moment a pleasure but a performance, and life always and only the continual fulfilment of a worthy purpose with a will. To him, therefore, with work to do, indulgence of every kind was without enjoyment ; and so, on this occasion, his hunger satisfied, he rose from the table, left his companions to their feasting, and took his young henchman, Hylas, along with him. The care which now weighed upon the heart of Hercules was the prosperity of the common enterprise, and primarily the sufficiency of the ship. In the late storms the ship had passed through, it appeared to him the oar he wielded had suffered damage ; and a new oar, accordingly, it was his purpose to provide. With this intention, therefore, and while his comrades feasted, Hercules repaired direct to the nearest forest ; and, that Hylas also might be occupied, he sent him, the while, for water from the fountain, to refresh him when his work was done, and be a supply in the further voyaging. Forward the hero advanced alone into the forest, selected the tree he thought the toughest, tore it with his hands up by the roots, stripped off the branches, and sat down assiduous to shape him a sufficient oar.

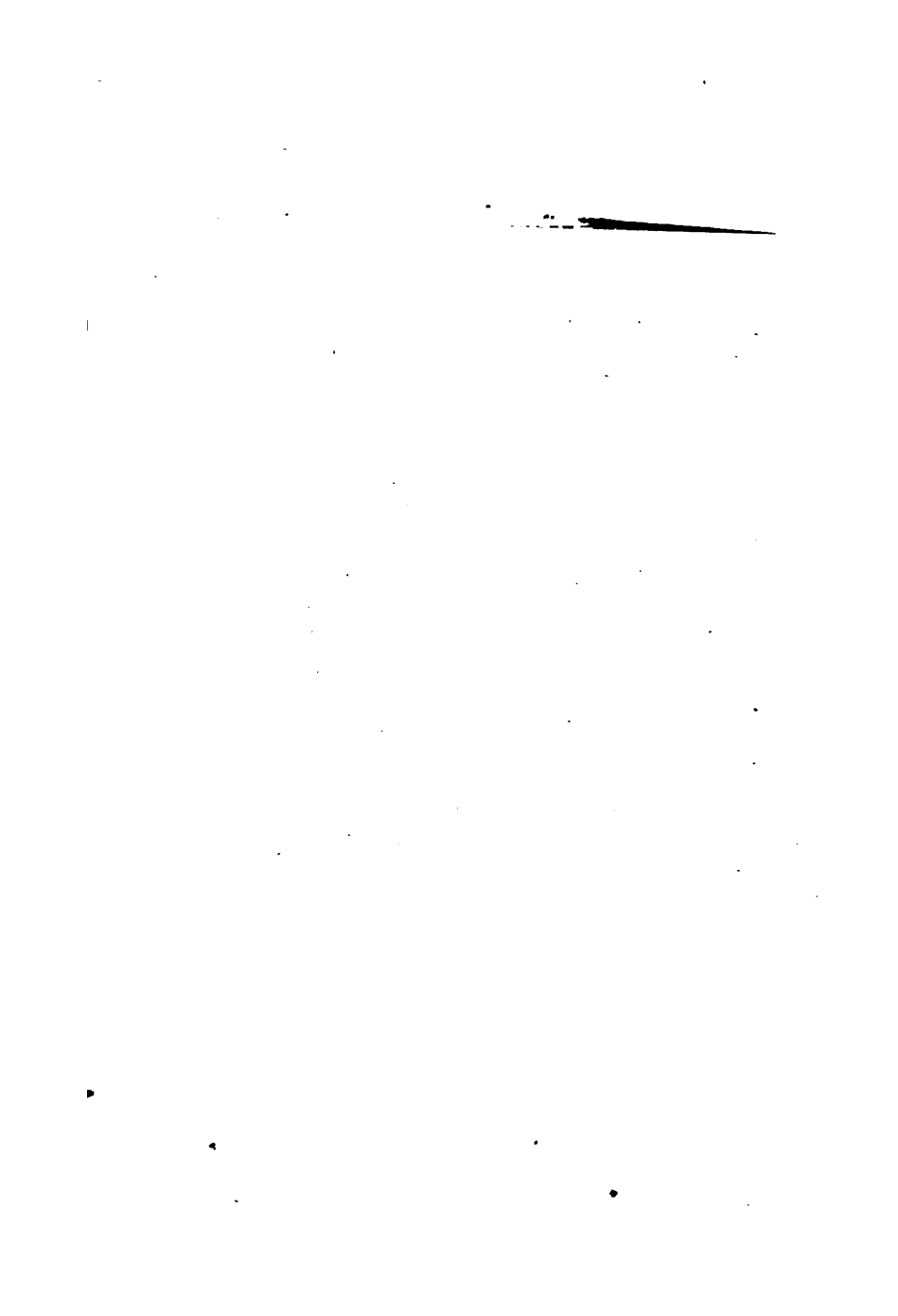
Hylas, meantime, had departed up the country,

carrying with him his empty pitcher, and minded to fetch his hero water of the purest and freshest, and have all ready to his liking when he returned with his work from the wood. Far and wide did he wander, and it seemed for long as if his enterprise were to be baffled, and no water to be had. At length, however, in the distance, he did stumble upon a tiny brooklet; and this, when he came upon it, he began tracing upwards to find its source, and draw the water at its sacred fountain. Round and round he wandered up its windings, noting always where the water was still and mirror-like, and looking in; but it was sundown before he reached the fountain, and in it, when he approached it, there already lay reflected the image of the full moon.

Hitherward as he journeyed up, it happened, the story tells us, his beautiful form attracted the eye and heart of the Nymph of the water; and suddenly she was seized and possessed with a passion for his person, and a determination to wile him to her side and secure him for the companion of her life. She was the lonely maiden of a lonely streamlet; but was a stranger to all *sense* of loneliness until she, that evening, saw the fair face of Hylas, as he, passing upward, looked ever and anon into her crystal dwelling. She had at no time witnessed any form half so beautiful, and, belike, had never before beheld the image or visage of a living man. Now, however, that she had seen *him*, she could not cease regarding and admiring him; and she felt she would be miserable for ever, unless she could not only have him continually beside her, but

have him all always to herself. How to detain and retain him became, therefore, for the time her sole instant purpose; and this very moment she must woo and win him, or lose him for life. Ever, therefore, as he walked up the banks, she followed him; and, at length, when he stood by the fountain in the moonlight, gazing in, she rose to the surface in all her charms, and began to beckon him to her embraces and heart. "Come," she called to him with the softest of voices, "come, thou lovely one; be thou all to me, I shall be all to thee; for here is no one with me, and without thee I am nothing. Mine is a domain of celestial clearness and starry beauty, serene and peaceful as the blue azure overhead, suggesting neither desire of better nor dread of worse; in which you and I may play without care, and delight and ravish one another to the full, for ever. Come, O come to my heart, my loved one, and be thou blessed in my blessedness, and I in thine."

Hylas looked and listened, and eye and ear were alike arrested and charmed. He now loved her as she had loved him, only he thought it strange that he could not have the maiden, but the maiden must have him; and so, stooping over the fountain, he bent himself more and more forward to descry, if possible, in its blue depths, some token and assurance of the palace she occupied. Here, as he strained his eye downwards, and bent his head more and more over, the maiden drew nearer and nearer, flung her arms rapturously round him, and vanished with him on the instant into the depths below. And all that remained of Hylas was the









*Naiads*

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echo of the shrieks which he uttered, when he felt the constraint of her arms dragging him down; and this echo, so shrill-piercing was it, hill after hill around caught up and repeated, until, in a little, it died for ever away.

Poor Hylas, we suspect, fell a victim to a very common vanity; and, singular and improbable as this story about him appears, he perished on the road along which nearly all men and women have travelled who have gone to ruin since the beginning of the world. Hylas had only seen himself in the water; had said to himself, "I am beautiful; at all events, deserving: it is meet and right, therefore, I should be honoured and lovingly cared for; waited on by the heavenly, and gratified in every wish." But the very rise of this self-consciousness had in one short summer twilight sealed his ruin, and numbered him with the lost. He had said to himself, "I am an I as well as my master; my being is as central as his, as worthy to be waited on, and as deserving of all good; why should not I seek my pleasure as much as he his?" And so he resolved to leave hero-service for self-service; and when, in bitterness of soul, he discovered that, in serving self, he was ruined, his cry for help, though all-penetrating, was unavailing. No man can serve two masters; and "*will-to-do*," which is the spirit of the true God, is eternally incompatible with "*wish-to-have*," which is the proper spirit of the false. Hylas had renounced the spirit of the true for the spirit of the false; and henceforth he is without a history and without a being, alike for the

world as for his former master : he has chosen death instead of life, and the only sign of life he ever after gave to mortal was the piercing wail he uttered when he found he had lost it.

Only one man heard the last cry of Hylas, and that was Polyphemus, the hero, to whom, as his name would seem to signify, the world very probably owes much of the legend of the ship *Argo* and its heroes. He, like Hercules, had risen from the table while his companions feasted, had gone forth to refresh and strengthen his soul by a solitary ramble in the cool of the forest, and, when there, had heard the cry of the lost one, and at once recognized it for the voice of Hylas. Instantly he turned to where it seemed to come from, and rushed off at full speed to the boy's help ; but nowhere, though he ran far and ranged wide, could he discern any trace of him, or see, in any quarter, man or monster, to whom, by possibility, he might have become a prey. At length it chanced, in his now distracted runnings hither and thither, he descried in the distance Hercules issuing from the wood, with his finished oar upon his shoulder, and immediately ran towards him, passionately calling to him to stop. Hercules turned and looked, anxiously wondering why his comrade showed such eagerness and panted so hard towards him. "Why so excited and so fast, friend?" called he coolly to the runner, as he came up. "Alas," cried he, "that I should be fated to bear to thee at such an hour such evil tidings. Thy servant Hylas, without doubt, hath perished. Either the robbers

have fallen upon him, or some wild beast hath devoured him. His cry for help I heard as I wandered solitary in yonder forest, and, though I straightway started to his assistance, I have not been able to find a vestige of him, and must now sorrowfully report him lost." "What! Hylas lost!" exclaimed Hercules, dashing his oar to the ground, sweating with anguish, and flashing with rage; "what is an oar, or an Argo, or any work or enterprise of mine, or man, when set against such a lovely creature of the gods? Let us off again till we find him. I slew his father in a hand-to-hand engagement, and I pledged my word to the man when dying to do a parent's duty to his orphan boy;" saying which, off he ran, and Polyphemus after him. Onward they sped, now to right and now to left, calling here, and calling there, the name of Hylas; but no Hylas answered, and no Hylas did they find. They only advanced deeper into the country and farther from their companions, still, as the story beautifully leaves them, hoping and pursuing. Mirror, this, in the soul of the noble, of the *infinite* pity of the gods for the lost—still hoping and still pursuing.

It was near the gray of the morning, and the comrades at the ship were all astir and busied with their departure. The wind was favourable, the omens propitious; and Tiphys, the helmsman, had urged them to seize the opportunity and at once be off. Instantly, therefore, they went on board, hoisted sail and put out to sea. The ship bounded away lightly before the breeze, and all for a time

were merry and gay of heart. It was not until the sun was risen and they were nearing the horizon, that they discovered Hercules and Polyphemus were not among them; and then, they began each one to upbraid his neighbour for having left them, or else to reflect on them for having wilfully parted company and stayed behind. Tiphys, the steersman, alone strove hard to suppress the strife and soothe their anger. The gods, he urged, by granting prosperous winds and propitious omens, designed their departure; and they should not, out of concern for anyone, disregard the signs the gods had given, or think that the will of the gods could be changed by them. "You may recover your companions," he added, "but you will lose your enterprise, and no good will come. What signifies the loss of a Hercules even, to the loss of an idea? The success of it is worth the sacrifice of us all!"

One man alone took no share in all this wrangle; but sat apart, moodily silent, and with a downcast pensive sadness of expression, gazing dreamily upon the purple wave. This was Jason, the leader of the whole enterprise; and yet to him, as such, all eyes naturally turned to speak the word which should silence the strife and restore harmony. This word, however, Jason seemed nowise inclined to utter; and he continued, even when the dispute was at its hottest, to sit as one utterly indifferent to the point at issue, and buried wholly in another interest. The sorrow which oppressed his heart, deadening his senses and clouding his countenance, it is not difficult for us here and now to understand

and justify; but there were those about him there and then, to whom it appeared as simply censurable; and one of these, unable longer to restrain his indignation, boldly ventured to impute to him the sole responsibility of this whole disorder. This was Telamon, the father of Ajax. "How," exclaimed he, "is this, that thou, alone of all, who by one word couldst end our squabble, shouldst hold aloof and say nothing? Comes it not from an unworthy jealousy of a distinguished rival? And do we not all see that thy indifference to our going with him or without him, is due to an inward satisfaction at the absence of the only one the least likely to outshine thee and eclipse thy glory? But why waste words in the matter; though thou and all my comrades here should prefer to sail without him, I, for one, refuse to do so, and insist upon the ship at once returning." And, hereupon, he addressed himself to Tiphys, and, in a voice of command, ordered him to put about and return for Hercules. This he was upon the point of compelling Tiphys to do, when he was withheld by the two sons of Boreas, and a prodigy it amazed and paralysed him to see slowly rising close behind the stern of the ship. This was the sea-god, Glaucus, who, ascending from the foaming waters, had appeared to signify it to be the will of Heaven that they should cease their quarrelling and pursue their voyage. "Why insist, ye heroes," said he, "against the will of Jupiter, in pressing a Hercules into *your* enterprise? Know ye not that for him there is quite other work appointed, which he must do all



alone, and not another with him? Him, and the like of him, ye must not seek to enlist under *your* banner and embark in *your* cause. He and they have work to do lying wholly apart from that of all other mortals, which must be done, and *can* be done, only *single-handed*. All success to him in his labours, and to you in yours." And when he said this, he plunged again under the waters; and the dark waves foamed in eddies round him as, in his descent, he disappeared. This Glaucus had been once a pious fisherman, well-read in weather omens, and reverently observant of their warning intimations as divine; and, for this and other loyalties, the gods had raised him to share along with them their immortal dignity, and hold ever after a human-prophet kingship in the empire of the deep. Loyal originally to the spirit of the elements, he had thereby learned, so to speak, their secret, and knew how, in kingly fashion, to turn that secret to man's account. He was, in short, the deification of the weather-wisdom of the steersman, Tiphys; and his appearance at the present crisis, dates for us the rise of the conviction in the crew of the Argo that it was the will of the gods they should not return, but proceed. Their gods' work, and that of their left companions, must be different; and the will of the gods must, before all, be done. This will, as soon as revealed, they recognized for sacred; and their recognition of it was their reconciliation together, heart and soul. Telamon, thereupon, at once, like a true brave man, owned his error; Jason, in the same spirit, already forgave his brother before he besought

him: and both, in mutual open recognition of each other's noblenesses and weaknesses, were truer friends and fellow-workers than before their misunderstanding. In all quarrels, the strife terminates when the parties see and admit in common the simple god's-fact above and within them. If not among all men, then certainly among noble men, "all battle is misunderstanding;" and so, when the misunderstanding ceases, the battle ends.

As it was with Telamon towards Jason, so was it with both toward Hercules, their greater. The one was moody, and the other violent, because neither knew why Hercules was gone; but when they understood that he had his separate appointed mission, as much as they had theirs, they did justice to him as well as to one another, and recognized his single-handed enterprise as far grander than theirs. Beautiful is it to note how willingly the hero would have served along with, and even under, his inferiors, and how a humble estimate of self and an exalted idea of his fellows is a never-failing sign of the hero-soul all over the world. Let us not think to drag such an one down to our lower level, still less cantingly affect to look down on him, because, following his own courses, he looks not up, or even aside to us; but rejoice rather in the revelation he makes to us, of the infinite possibilities latent in the virtue of a solitary, single-hearted man.





## VII.

### Philemon and Baucis.

**A**T the head of a rich and fertile valley in the land of Phrygia there once lived a pair of poor but pious people, on whom, as worthy, the gods one day bestowed a signal honour, and whom the world, for ages after, loved to remember under the names of Philemon and Baucis. The hut they occupied as man and wife for long years together was of small dimensions, and had been built and thatched and furnished by the diligence of their own hands. Designed, reared, and fitted up agreeably to the means supplied them, and their own modest wishes, they desired no other; and they would not have exchanged it for the lordliest mansion in all the valley. In it, they had grown old together; and it was in every part dear and sacred to them as the memory of the long, happy, and contented days they had spent within it. Here, as in no other situation possible now, "the vague, shoreless universe had become for them a firm city and dwelling which they knew." By simple *abiding* in it, it became their home; and any breaking up of it

would have been disastrous, if not ruinous, to the life they led in it; to the wholeness, or health, of which "permanency of relation" is, in after-life especially, an essential condition. An exchange of it for a wealthier, too, would have been to them an exchange not for the better, but for the worse.

Attached to the dwelling they had themselves erected, lay all round a trim, modest garden; which they, with their own hands too, tilled and planted, and on the fruit of which they lived a life even kings might envy. The little it supplied them afforded not less, but more, than the share of good they had humbly decided upon as their sufficient portion; and, with it, they were richer and happier than those are who, though they have everything, long for more. So true is it, that happiness springs not from a large fortune, but temperate habits and simple wishes, and that riches increase not by increase of the supply of want, but by decrease of the sense of it,—the minimum of it being the maximum of them. Thus, the two we speak of, though in seeming poverty, lived in substantial plenty; and their poor circumstances were not only tolerable, but good and easy; because they wisely argued, that, what *was*, would not be, if it had not right to be, and were not, as such, divinely sanctioned and appointed.

Here, and thus, dwelt and lived Philemon and Baucis, "childless, in still seclusion, and now verging towards old age," serving, and served by, living and dying for, one another; and neither was he master nor she mistress, but both commanded

and both obeyed. They were long ago "no more twain but one flesh," and so intimately had they lived together, that each was not merely all to the other, but each was the other.

And now "one meek, yellow evening, or dusk," it chanced that, as the two were busy weeding and dressing their humble garden, their attention was diverted by the sound of unseemly noises a short way down the valley behind them, when, looking round, they saw their nearest neighbour driving violently two strangers from his mansion, showering after them abusive language, and instigating upon them a whole kennel of barking dogs. This they at once, and justly, construed into an instance of their neighbour's all too-notorious want of hospitality; and they watched to see if the strangers, who turned upwards, intended for the path which led to them. It was not long before they saw them strike into it, and step direct towards their little dwelling. Upon this, quickly arranging the implements they had been working with, they turned in to have all ready for their expected visitors, and to receive and welcome them as guests, to whom, they felt, any hospitality they might render would be trifling in comparison with the honour they received in being reckoned worthy to entertain them. They had only to satisfy themselves that all was right, not to set it, when the strangers arrived at the door of their dwelling, and, in stooping attitude, entered in.

The taller, and every way grander-looking figure of the two, was the first to enter the cottage and accost the aged pair:—"Two belated travellers

from a distant region," he said, "venture to cast themselves for the night upon your kindness, and to trust themselves in your hands. We have fasted long and wandered far, and are both hungry and weary. Your richer neighbours down the valley have, one and all, not only not admitted us, but treated us inhumanly, and driven us off; and we now betake ourselves, not without confidence, as a last resort to you." To this address of the stranger the old people listened, standing; and, when it was finished, Philemon bowed respectfully, and answered thus:—"It shall never be said of us, at any rate, poor though we be, that from us any hungry, weary stranger sought hospitality, and was refused. To all we have to give we make you welcome; we could only wish our poverty had been less for your sakes. But such as we have, and are, is all at your service. We are little worthy of the honour you pay us by the confidence you place in us, and only hope you do not overrate our poor resources." And then, the old man, with respectful beckonings, pointed his guests to a seat prepared for them, over which his assiduous helpmate had just thrown a cloth for cover, of which she had with her own fingers spun the yarn and woven the web. Upon this the strangers at once gratefully seated themselves; and as they did so, they tendered their special acknowledgments to their kind old hostess.

Both now seated, their hospitable entertainers set themselves, with all diligence, to provide of the best they had for their strengthening and refreshment; and, as they shuffled to and fro, or out and

in, busy after their preparations, they kept up a constant stream of talk with their guests—now she catching up and carrying on his story as he happened to leave it, now he, hers—with the express intent that the strangers might feel at home, and not weary.

And first of all, Baucis hastened to the hearth, and made ready a fire to cook the victuals, separating the dead ashes, collecting the still living embers, feeding these with dried leaves and chips of fat pinewood, and, with her old short-panting breath, blowing the whole into a flame. She then rose up, and brought from an outhouse adjoining a pile of split logs and branches, chopped them smaller, threw them on the flames with her fingers, and placed upon the fire, now crackling into a blaze, a little brass boiler, into which, after stripping off the outer leaves, she put the pot-herbs her husband had just collected from their well-watered garden. And he, having gathered the herbs, which she is now busy stripping and washing, raises a two-pronged fork with a long wooden handle, and reaches down with it, as it hung from a blackened beam overhead, a chine of smoke-dried and smoke-begrimed bacon. From this he cuts a sufficient section, which he takes and drops gently into the vessel into which his spouse has just put the pot-herbs.

And now, while the pot is boiling, and the victuals cooking, the two assisted each other to let down a bathing-tub from the wall, where, by a sufficient handle, it hung suspended; and, after

filling it with tepid water, they bore it to their guests, that, in it, they might both wash and refresh their wearied, way-sore, and way-soiled limbs. This service done, and while the strangers washed, and her husband waited, Baucis set herself to arrange for the clean and tidy service of the meal now preparing. Her first care was to adjust the couch on which, in those regions, the guests reclined while eating, and the table on which, as with us, the food was served. The couch, in this case, was of wicker-work—a basket one, so to speak, wrought of willow; and the cushion on which the guests were supported, as they reclined forward on their left side towards the table, was stuffed with mere sea-grass; but, this time, there was drawn over the couch itself a covering, which, though old and worthless, was never spread upon it except on days of high festivity, observed in honour of the great gods. On this, the guests, after washing, reclined; Baucis having previously adjusted to it a simple, beechen table, steadying it, by openly, and without apology, placing under a shortened limb it had, a piece of a broken jar lying near her for the purpose. This done, she proceeded first to rub the table all over with green, fragrant mint, and then, still with girt-up garments, to dish and serve the meal now ready.

The meal proper, as we guess, from the preparations, was rigorously frugal, nothing to whet the appetite before beginning, and nothing to tempt to further eating when nature had had enough. Fruits there were indeed, as well as honey and wine; but



the body of the meal was Spartan to the last degree ; and the sauce, hunger. While it lasted, the good people only stood and waited, she serving the viands, and he, the wine ; all they could boast of being, that the whole was grown, or fed, on their own little garden-plot, and nursed into maturity under their own hands. But, more than all the meal they served up to the strangers, was their manner of serving it ; and this was done in the spirit and style of a true lord and lady. Their manner of hospitality was grander and nobler than had they loaded their table with the richest and best the earth yields. Their entertainment, though simple, was noble, because sincere and hearty ; and they served it up alike without shame and without show. They were no more conscious of it as a thing remarkable, or out of course, than they were when they span their yarn, or pruned their trees. Royal old pair !

Unconscious of anything great, or small, in what they did for their guests, they soon became alive to a very singular and surprising honour done and shown to them. Only to unconscious and pious souls do such things happen ; and it was in Philemon's hands the wonder occurred. It was his office, we said, to replenish the wine-cup on the table ; and he had filled it more than once before he observed the miracle that was going on. At length, however, he discovered to his amazement, that, though he had filled the wine-cup three times over, the vessel from which he drew was as full as at the beginning ; and this he no sooner noticed than, with agitated beckonings and astonished

looks, he called his wife aside to witness the wonder. "See," said he, "here is a strange thing befallen us; for all the wine I have drained off, the vessel is as full as ever. This is no mere witchery wrought to deceive us, but a sign and assurance visible that the strangers who honour us are more than mortal, and, belike, gods themselves in human form. For mark, too, how ethereal and grand they look, what a soul and life breathes through their every form and movement, and what an earnest expression in the face and manner of the elder, as though his heart were, like the great Parent's, burdened with the burden of the world." "And the younger," added she, who, with a flash of rapid insight, saw at a glance her husband's slower, because reverent, thinkings, "how reverently he demeans himself in the presence of his senior, how mirror-like he reflects his every mood and purpose, and how ready he seems for the execution of any command his senior may require of him. They are, without doubt, gods, or gods' messengers, who have come to visit us, and now let us, if so be they will accept it, repair the blunder we have committed, and here and now, after forgiveness asked and granted, make ready for the sacrifice we should have rendered when they entered."

And, hereupon, the two, in a flutter, first of all drew near suppliantly towards the strangers, and, with uplifted folded hands and on bended knees, implored them to overlook their blind neglect; and then, after acceptance and approval frankly signified, they rose, and hastened with light, and even buoyant

movement, to prepare the meditated sacrifice. This they, with one thought, agreed should consist of a favourite goose they prized the most of every living creature they kept about their dwelling,—a loyal and faithful domestic, which had more than once, by forewarning them, forearmed them against serious danger; and, because the most valued of all their property, the most worthy offering they could think of making. “The gods have given it us,” they reasoned, “and the protection it has been to us; let us own their gift, and our sense of it as theirs, by now rendering it back to them, as our life-guardians and life-givers thereby.” This, therefore, it was they had gone to seek and slay for offering; but, strange to say, the animal, as if aware of their intention, instead of, as usual, running to meet them, ran away from them, and the faster and with the more alarm, the more quickly they pursued. In its flight, however, it sped not on and on, but round and round, dodging, now to right, now to left, its remorseless pursuers. At length, when the old man had all but caught it, the poor bird, with a scream of desperation, raised his wing, rose upward, and, then descending, shot for shelter by the door-way direct under the cottage-roof. The old man and woman, now sure of their prey, walked in, still all panting, straight after it, and ready to at once seize and slay it; but, what was their surprise to find it standing, peaceful and assured, at the senior stranger’s feet. Here, at this sight, they at once drew back, and, from very awe, they ventured not to seize, or even touch it; the more that

the stranger, who now stood up as if to defend it, raised his hand to forbid them.

"Sacrifice not for us," he said, "so faithful a servant; and think not that it is possible to do honour to the gods otherwise than by using the gifts they have given you,—this as the guardian, and that as the stay of the life within you, as they have appointed. Nevertheless, though ye mistake the worship with which the gods are satisfied, ye have not unwisely read the omens they have sent. We two, as ye have surmised, are not men, but gods from the upper-world. I am Jupiter, the King and Father of all Spirits, high and low; and my companion and fellow-guest is Mercury, the swift and ready messenger and minister of the Olympian will. We, in our concern for the world we govern, have, as gods are wont, assumed together your human form; and, under this guise, are now come down to assure ourselves by actual experience of the reported inhumanity of the dwellers in this your valley. These, ye two excepted, we have, as you know, found as wicked as rumour represented; and now we cannot endure that such inhuman monsters should continue to oppress the earth with their iniquity for another day. Within an hour from this very moment shall our will be seen upon them, and just judgment done. Do ye now follow us to the heights behind your cottage, and be ye our witnesses of how the gods regard those whose hearts are dead to the pleadings of humanity."

And, thereupon, he turned, and stepped forth by the door of the cottage, and Mercury along with

him, followed close by the awe-stricken aged pair. These, as they followed, tottered unsteadily, and, stooping hard, toiled heavily and breathlessly up the face of the hill, leaning upon their staves. Here, as they laboured up, and when they were within a bow-shot of the summit, their ears were appalled by the noise as of thundering, and a rushing of winds and waters issuing evidently from the valley at their feet; and, looking round, to their horror, all from their cottage downward had vanished, everything and every one the valley contained within it was overwhelmed by a waste welter of rushing, heaving waters—the whole as desolate and inhospitable looking as an unvisited wilderness. The old people, at sight of this, turned at once bodily round, and gazed downwards with tremblings of astonishment and awe at the heaven's judgment, and at the dread vision of the horrid abyss on the verge of which they had been all along living, and were now standing. But, what most of all affected their essentially humane natures, was the thought of the ruin of so many beings, all more or less known to them, as neighbours and fellow-mortals, originally gifted with the possibility of all good. This pained their hearts almost beyond endurance; and it seemed as if, in their yearning, they would, on the very spot, languish wholly away.

The only human relic that remained in all the valley, was the little hut they had lived together in, and loved so dearly; and the sight of it standing there, all abandoned and uncared-for, re-awoke their sympathy with life, and they felt as if for the sake

of it they would, willingly not die. But what was their surprise when, as in wistful gaze they looked towards it, they saw it of a sudden expand and heighten into a temple, which, for size and glory, seemed worthier than any reared by human hands for divine worship—the arches and pillars of the chastest marble, and the domes and pinnacles of purest gold—showing itself now, to the eye even of sense, what, in the eye of heaven, it had been from the beginning: proving how, even in old Greek pagandom, the gods were thought to have their special, most sacred and honoured, temple in lowly dwellings and humble hearts.

This sight was the most amazing of all that had yet surprised the aged people. It was wonderful that the gods should have honoured them by accepting as worthy of their poor hospitality; wonderful, that they should have been saved to see the judgment of the gods on all their neighbours; but most wonderful of all, was the revelation to their very senses that in heaven's eyes their poor cottage was not unworthy to rank and appear as a god's temple. Did they feel proud in consequence? By no means: the truly humble become from day to day humbler; and no god would reward a virtue by a gift which would destroy it.

Here, as the two stood wondering, Jupiter stepped up to them, and in serene, earnest tones thus addressed them: "Behold, my people, in all this judgment your eyes have witnessed, a proof of the sense the gods in heaven have of man's treatment of his brother, and how, by his treatment of the

human, man is judged. As men deal with their fellows, so do the gods deal with them ; and the judgment ye have seen pronounced on your neighbours and yourselves, expresses the essential spirit of all the divine judgment that was, that is, or that is to come, in the world. They, as inhuman, are rejected ; ye, as human, are accepted : and, inasmuch as ye have done it unto your brethren, ye have done it unto us. In doing as ye have done by your fellows, ye have done as we do by you ; and by this ye prove the presence of that spirit with you which is in us. To you, therefore, for reward, as worthy, we grant you of our own privilege. Ask what ye will, and it shall be given unto you. Do ye two consult apart a little, and we, ere we leave you, shall grant what ye may agree upon."

The pious old pair then consulted together, and soon returned with two simple petitions as the summary of their whole desire. "And what," said the god, advancing to meet them, "have ye two agreed together to ask of us? Ask, and it shall be done to you." "We," answered Philemon, "were happy if the gods would, of their favour, gratify us in two wishes ; the granting of these two were our complete contentment." "Your first wish," asked the god, "is?" "That we two," answered Philemon, "be permitted to spend the allotted days remaining to us, as priest and priestess, in the temple which was once the hut so dear to both of us, and serve the rest of our days there together as the acknowledged servants of the gods, who have so mercifully favoured us." "This request of thine,"

replied the god, "is as we anticipated; and most reasonable it is that ye should ask, and we consent, that ye be openly acknowledged as being what, unacknowledged, ye from the first have been. Be this at once granted; and now, speak your second request, ere we leave you." "That we, who have for so long spent one undivided life together, may be permitted to end it in one day. Since Baucis would as little like to outlive Philemon, as he, her." "Be this also granted," was the instant response of Jupiter; and straight as he consented, he looked his benediction, and disappeared, he and Mercury together.

And so it happened that Philemon and Baucis descended from the mountain and re-entered their cottage, now an acknowledged temple, where they served, for years after, as the priest and priestess, honoured to their dying day, and beyond, by the pious, who from far and near came to consult the god to whom they ministered. And so, too, it happened that, as, one day, the two, now bowed with age and long-serving, stood at the porch of the temple, talking over the past mysterious god's-ways with them and their people, Philemon, looking at Baucis, and Baucis at Philemon, saw, the one the other, slowly undergoing a strange mutation; and each, recognising it for the end, whispered, he to her, and she to him, a long-drawn "Farewell;" and, ere the parting words had well died away on the lips, both were transformed, he into an Oak-tree, and she into a Linden.

Here, for long ages and generations after, the



two, thus transformed, stood, as in life, through storm and sunshine, embracing one another, and, as such, visited by pilgrim after pilgrim, who, as they rested under their broad shadow, delighted to recall the story of the shelter they had been, and harbour they had given, to the Ruler of the World, when he wandered over it a stranger and an out-cast. And this act of theirs was deemed so divine, that the sanctity was transferred from within the temple to the arbour without; and the two trees henceforth were the shrine of the whole worship, round which, in time, the temple grew, and in which, henceforward, the pious hung up all their offerings and vowed their vows, standing and swearing by the name of Philemon and Baucis. And so, as Ovid adds, to whom we owe the story,—

“Cura pii Dis sunt, et, qui coluere, coluntur.”

“The pious-hearted are cared for by the gods; and by men, honoured and worshipped as divinities, when once they have by death stripped off for ever their week-day garments.”





## VIII.

### Arethusa.

**F**AR away in Greece there dwelt a river-god, Alpheus by name, who fell in love with a nymph of his own waters, Arethusa ;— he, reputed a hunter on the heights of Arcadia, she, the fairest of a troop of maidens in the glades below ; both, in reality, genii of different moods of the same stream,—he, the génie of its roaring torrents, she, of its crystalline, gently-flowing currents. Often had they beheld each other, and given and received glances which there was no mistaking,—his, towards her betraying the heat of passion, hers, the shrinking of childish fear. The fury of his aspect, rudeness of his manners, and harsh accent of his voice, as he approached her to pay his addresses, only disturbed and agitated her bosom, excited all her horrors, and impelled her to rise and flee with, as for most part happened, frantic looks, streaming hair, and mad leapings, away for safety to the abodes of her sisters in the depths of the sea. The very sound of his footsteps in the distance, to the echo of which among the mountains she was tremblingly alive, would make

her heart throb with terror and her countenance change.

But he was ever as much bent upon overtaking her, as she was in avoiding him ; and, at length, he, one day, vowed he would never rest till he found her, and would follow her, even though in her flight she should seek to escape from him beyond the seas. This time, such was the panic with which she fled before him, that she never halted, till, all wearied and breathless, she stood on the verge of the ocean, when, screaming aloud to her sisters of the deep,—

“ ‘ Oh, save me ! Oh, guide me !  
And bid the deep hide me !  
For he grasps me now by the hair ! ’  
The loud Ocean heard,  
To its blue depth stirred,  
And divided at her prayer ;  
And under the water  
The Earth’s white daughter  
Fled like a sunny beam ;  
Behind her descended  
Her billows, unblended  
With the brackish Dorian stream.”

Nor was this her escape, for, straight as she plunged in, he rushed after,—

“ As an eagle pursuing  
A dove to his ruin  
Down the streams of the cloudy wind,”—

her ocean sisters, the while, calling to her aloud :  
“ Flee, flee, Arethusa, Alpheus is behind thee and will overtake thee.” And they sped to her help, bore her away with them, and never left her till they landed her in the region of the setting sun,

on the shore of the island of Trinacria. Hitherward also did Alpheus follow her, determined to allow himself and her no rest, till she suffered him, all languishing, to melt away and merge himself in her pure being, wherein alone he dimly felt he could know and enjoy peace. Here, once more, again he renewed the chase, and she her flight before him ; and here again, as, in the pursuit, he was nigh seizing her, she with a shriek wildly threw herself again into the arms of her ocean sisters, minded never to revisit the earth more, as a river-Naiad, a prey to terror and unrest. But here, too, he plunged in after her, resolved like her, giving up his mad earth-hunt, to make his home beside her in the quiet depths of the sunny waters. And now, finding him purified by death, and stilled into clearness, she at length gave him her hand, and they two became what, had they known it, they were from the beginning, one being and one life.

“ And now from their fountains  
In Enna's mountains,  
Down one vale where the morning basks,  
Like friends once parted  
Grown single-hearted,  
They ply their watery tasks.  
At sun-rise they leap  
From their cradles steep  
In the cave of the shelving hill ;  
At noon-tide they flow  
Through the woods below,  
And the meadows of Asphodel ;  
And at night they sleep  
In the rocking deep  
Beneath the Ortygian shore :—  
Like spirits that lie  
In the azure sky  
When they love but live no more.”

And so they, if they do not what we call live, still love together, in the clear depths of a perennial fountain, which men, after the Naiad, call the fountain of Arethusa, from whose waters, if they drink of them, they imagine they acquire a sympathy with the secret spirit of Nature, and an ability to sing an idyll to her praise; and this power they piously ascribe to the inspiration of the virgin-hearted Lady who dwells below.







